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## Education Committee

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### HB 1431

**Brief Description:** Regarding alternative learning experience courses.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Santos, Dahlquist, Bergquist and Pollet; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Defines Alternative Learning Experiences (ALE) by type of course rather than by type of program.
- Defines hybrid ALE courses as providing at least 20 percent weekly in-person instruction, and allows enrollment by students in grades kindergarten through 12.
- Defines remote ALE courses as providing less than 20 percent weekly in-person instruction, and limits enrollment to grades nine through 12.
- Uses a current definition of an online ALE course but limits enrollment to grades six through 12.
- Prohibits school districts from purchasing co-curricular experiences for students in ALE programs unless these experiences are provided to all district students in the exact same manner.

**Hearing Date:** 2/14/13

**Staff:** Barbara McLain (786-7383).

#### **Background:**

Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) programs provide a way for students to be enrolled in public education without being required to meet the in-class seat-time requirements for regular instruction. They also provide a way for school districts to claim students as enrolled in nontraditional programs for purposes of state funding.

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*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.*

There are three primary types of ALE programs identified in statute: online programs; parent partnership programs that include significant participation by parents in the design and implementation of the student's learning; and contract-based learning.

However, these broad definitions are illustrative rather than exclusive, and in practice school districts have designed a wide array of ALE programs with varying amounts of classroom-based instruction offered in combination with individualized learning outside the classroom. Some students might be enrolled in an ALE program that has characteristics of two or more of the program types.

For the 2011-12 school year, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) reported the following full-time equivalent student enrollment in the ALE programs:

- Online programs: 8,433
- Parent partnership programs: 13,483
- Contract-based learning: 8,809

Enrollment patterns among the programs vary. For example, 95 percent of contract-based learning students are high school students, compared to only 24 percent of students in parent partnership programs and 61 percent of students in online programs. Contract-based programs are provided largely for students who live in the district (83 percent of students). Two thirds of students in online programs and one third of students in parent partnership programs live outside the county where the program is offered.

An online course is defined as one where the course content is delivered electronically using the internet or other computer-based methods, and more than half of the teaching is conducted from a remote location using an online learning management system.

School districts are prohibited from purchasing or contracting for co-curricular experiences such as lessons, trips, and other activities, for students in ALE programs unless substantially similar experiences are available to students in the district's regular education program.

### **Summary of Bill:**

Descriptions of three types of ALE programs are replaced by definitions of three types of ALE courses:

1. A hybrid course is one where a student receives in-person instruction from a teacher for at least 20 percent of the total weekly time for the course.
2. A remote course is one where a student receives in-person instruction from a teacher for less than 20 percent of the total weekly time for the course.
3. An online course has the same definition as current law, with the additional stipulation that the student's primary instructional interaction is with a certificated teacher.

In-person instruction must be in a physical classroom environment and for the purpose of teaching, review of assignments, testing, evaluation, or other learning activities identified in the student's learning plan.

High school ALE courses must meet district or state graduation requirements and be offered for credit.

School districts may claim students enrolled in ALE programs for state funding only under the following circumstances:

1. Enrollment in remote courses is limited to students in grades nine through 12.
2. Enrollment in online courses is limited to students in grades six through 12.

There are exceptions for students with documented health conditions that prevent them from physically attending school, students who are temporarily absent, or students in certain grades who have been removed from a classroom due to discipline issues. A district may also permit a student in a lower grade to enroll in an online course if the student needs access to a higher-level course for academic reasons.

Enrollment in hybrid courses is permitted for students in grades kindergarten through 12.

Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, school districts must denote the type of ALE course in the statewide student information system.

School districts are prohibited from purchasing or contracting for co-curricular experiences for students in ALE programs unless these experiences are provided to all students in the district in the exact same manner.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Preliminary fiscal note available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.