

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5328

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As of February 1, 2013

**Title:** An act relating to creating a school-grading program that relies on the accountability index.

**Brief Description:** Creating a school-grading program that relies on the accountability index.

**Sponsors:** Senators Litzow, Hobbs, Dammeier, Hatfield, Baumgartner, Roach, Hill, Braun, Shin and Tom.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/30/13.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Staff:** Susan Mielke (786-7422)

**Background:** There are states that currently have A-F or 5-star grading systems for the public schools in the state. Florida has had an A-F school grading system since 1999. Generally, the states use an index with weighted multiple measures, including student performance on statewide assessments. Some of the other measures used include the following:

- student growth and growth of the bottom 25 percent of students are used by Florida, and Oklahoma;
- high school graduation rates and attendance rates are used by New Mexico and Oklahoma;
- percent of English language learners that are reclassified is used by Arizona;
- closing the achievement gaps of subgroups of students are used by Ohio and South Carolina;
- participation and performance in accelerated curricula and postsecondary readiness are used by Arizona, Florida, Ohio, and Nevada; and
- progress to target goals that schools must achieve an A letter grade or improve by one letter grade by 2015 and achieve an A or improve by two letter grades by 2020 is used by Indiana. All schools reaching the 90th percentile, for all student and subgroups of students is used by New Mexico.

The Washington achievement index is a joint project between the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The achievement index

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is a snapshot of a school's performance based on statewide assessments and includes four indicators: achievement by students who are not from low-income families, achievement by students from low-income families, achievement compared to a school's statistical peers, i.e., schools with similar student characteristics, and a school's improvement from the previous year. A separate achievement gap matrix measures the progress a school is making in closing achievement gaps by comparing combined White and Asian student achievement to combined Hispanic, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander student achievement. The achievement gap measure indicates improvement from one year to the next as well as a peers rating. A workgroup has been established to help determine which other performance measures will be included in the index. The intent is to have the index completed by September 2013.

**Summary of Bill:** The bill as referred to committee not considered.

**Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute):** The School-Grading Program and the Washington School Recognition Program are created.

The School-Grading Program. Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, SBE must use the accountability index to identify schools using the letter grades A through F, unless the school has less than ten students:

- A for schools making excellent progress;
- B for schools making above average progress;
- C for schools making satisfactory progress;
- D for schools making less than satisfactory progress; and
- F for schools failing to make adequate progress.

SBE must adopt criteria for each school letter grade, giving added weight to student achievement in reading; and for schools serving any students in grades nine, ten, eleven, or twelve, giving added weight to the graduation rate of the school's at-risk students. In order for a high school to earn a grade of an A, the school must demonstrate that its at-risk students are making adequate progress. Schools earning a C grade or higher must demonstrate that at least half of the students in the school who are in the lowest 25th percentile on the reading and mathematics statewide assessments are making adequate progress; if not, then the grade is decreased by one letter.

The accountability index must measure the increase in student achievement on the statewide assessments in reading, writing, mathematics, and science; and the reduction in student achievement gaps. The index may include additional student outcome measurements. For schools serving any students in grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve, at least 50 percent of a school's grade must be determined using the accountability index and the remaining percentage must be based on the following:

- the high school's graduation rate and the graduation rate of at-risk students;
- post-secondary readiness of the school's on-time graduates' scores on the SAT, ACT, or a post-secondary placement test; and
- as valid data becomes available, student performance and participation in AP courses, international baccalaureate courses, and dual enrollment courses, and the achievement of national industry certification.

For the purposes of the school-grading program, at-risk students are students scoring at level one or level two on the eighth grade statewide student reading and mathematics assessments.

Schools that serve any students in kindergarten through third grade earn a grade designation instead of a school grade, which is given to the feeder school in which at least 60 percent of the students are expected to be assigned.

A school district's grade must be calculated using student performance and learning gains data from statewide assessments. OSPI must annually report each school district's grade to the Governor and the Legislature. OSPI must revise the model school performance report to include each school district's and school's grade and annually post on OSPI's website each district's and school's report cards, including the grade history of the district and school. Each school district must include each school's grade and the district's grade in the district's annual school performance report.

SBE and OSPI must adopt rules, if necessary, to implement the program.

The Washington School Recognition Program. All public schools that earn a school grade may participate in the program that will provide a financial award to schools that:

- earn an A under the School-Grading Program; or
- improve at least one letter grade or more and sustain the improvement for the following school year.

The program is subject to the funds being appropriated. OSPI must distribute any funds appropriated to the schools for nonrecurring bonuses to the faculty and staff; or for nonrecurring expenditures for educational equipment, materials, or temporary personnel to maintain and improve student performance. The use of the funds must be jointly determined by the school's staff and school advisory council, if there is an advisory council. If there is no agreement by February 1, the award must be equally distributed to all classroom teachers currently teaching in the school. If the school no longer exists when the award is made then the award must be distributed as a bonus to the teachers who taught at the school in the previous year. The awards are not subject to collective bargaining.

In accordance with OSPI's rules, each school that earns an A under the School-Grading Program or improves at least one letter grade or more and sustains the improvement for the following school year must be given greater authority over the state funds received by the school, including apportionment and categorical funds, until the school's grade declines.

Any performance-based funding policy adopted in the biennial appropriations act must factor in the performance of schools.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Florida has used a letter grading system for schools since 1999. It has provided a high level of public awareness in the health of the schools. School staff, students, and parents are proud of their schools that earn high grades. Schools that receive low scores often initiate school improvement efforts on their own because of greater community involvement and support. The current labels that Washington uses for schools are confusing. The public will better understand an A-F rating system. It will help parents and the community to understand the performance of schools. We grade our students, why not grade our schools?

CON: We are not against school accountability. But there are many reasons that students do not achieve or have slower gains: hunger, sickness, homelessness, family violence, etc. At-risk students are not those performing at level 1 or 2 but those who are suffering. We need to reward schools that are meeting the needs of each child instead of assigning them a grade. This is an effort to infuse our public schools with the business model of rewarding productivity. The schools that receive high grades would get more resources when it is the lower performing schools that need the resources. Is it more important to set up a punitive system of grading schools or to get our students out of overcrowded classrooms? The state must fully fund basic education and satisfy the *McCleary* court decision before starting any new programs. SBE and OSPI are currently revising the accountability index and using a very public process. The index should be completed by June so there is a timing issue – if this bill makes additional changes, then the index isn't going to be able to be used for federal accountability. SBE debated having such a letter grading system for schools but decided against it. The rewards that will be provided will not be extrinsic nor the most motivating for change.

OTHER: How will special education students figure into the grade? Most students with special needs need greater support. Let the process to revise the index be completed before moving to something like this.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Litzow, prime sponsor; Alan Weiss, citizen; Dave Powell, Stand for Children; Anne Luce, Partnership for Learning, WA Roundtable.

CON: Edri Geiger, Vancouver Public Schools; Sarajane Siegfriedt, citizen; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, WA Education Assn.; Marie Sullivan, WA State School Directors Assn.; Alan Burke, Andy Kelly, OSPI; Ben Rarick, SBE; Jerry Bender, Assn. of WA Principals.

OTHER: Romona Hattendorf, WA State PTA.