

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5941

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to comprehensive education data.

Brief Description: Regarding a comprehensive education data improvement system.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Oemig, Kastama, Jarrett, McAuliffe, Marr, Hobbs and Tom).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/24/09, 3/27/09 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House)**

- Declares legislative intent to establish a comprehensive K-12 education data improvement system for financial, student, and educator data.
- Specifies the intended data elements and data capacity of the data improvement system.
- Establishes a K-12 Data Governance Group within the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and assigns responsibilities.
- Requires the OSPI to submit a preliminary report by November 15, 2009, and a final report by September 1, 2010, for a phase-in plan and cost estimates for implementing the data improvement system.
- Directs the Education Research and Data Center in the Office of Financial Management to identify the critical education research and policy questions to be addressed and the data needed to address them.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Probst, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Hope, Assistant Ranking

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.

Minority Member; Cox, Dammeier, Hunt, Johnson, Liias, Maxwell, Orwall, Santos and Sullivan.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383)

Background:

Education Data.

Over the last 10 years, the demand has grown for more and better data about student achievement. This includes data about student characteristics that might affect achievement, data collected at an individual student level to enable monitoring of progress over time, and data about various external variables, such as teachers and resources spent on instructional programs, that have an impact on achievement. In order for this information to be used for program evaluation or public policy decisions, there must be a common list of the required data elements, computer systems at the district and state level capable of storing and compiling the data so that all of the variables can be analyzed, and people at the school and district level assigned to enter the data and assure its accuracy.

The current core student records system (CSRS) contains student-level data submitted monthly by school districts, but the system is limited in the number of data elements collected and its ability to link data across separate systems, including those containing data about teachers or finances. A new comprehensive education data and research system (CEDARS) has been under development since 2006 which will significantly increase the state's education data capacity and link with a new certification system (e-Cert) containing data about teachers. The CEDARS system and the e-Cert system are expected to be implemented in the 2009-10 school year.

Less work has been done regarding K-12 financial data. As funds are appropriated, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) continues to transition the state apportionment system to a modern software platform. Various education finance reform proposals envision using school-level financial data for both allocation and monitoring. School-level financial data does not currently exist consistently across the state and at present neither school districts nor the OSPI have the capacity to collect it.

In 2007 the Legislature directed a K-12 Data Feasibility Study to examine opportunities for additional data collection and capacity. One of the recommendations of the report issued in January 2009 was creation of a clear K-12 data governance structure to better manage the demand for additional school district data.

Education Research and Data Center.

In 2007 an Education Research and Data Center (Data Center) was created within the Office of Financial Management. The purpose of the Data Center is to serve as a hub for data originating from the various education sectors: early learning, K-12, two- and four-year higher education, and workforce training and employment. The Data Center does not collect data, but develops data sharing agreements with the various education and workforce agencies and conducts longitudinal analysis using the merged data, with a focus on what happens to students as they transition between one sector and another.

The Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program Committee (LEAP) also participates in the Data Center. The LEAP is the Legislature's independent source of information and technology for developing budgets, communicating budget decisions, and tracking revenue, expenditure, and staffing activity of state agencies.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Education Data.

It is the Legislature's intent to establish a comprehensive K-12 data improvement system for financial, student, and educator data. The objective of the system is outlined. It is further the intent that the system serve various information needs, with the benefits of additional data weighed against the costs to school districts to collect it, and remain focused on improving education.

It is the Legislature's intent that the K-12 data improvement system include the following:

- comprehensive educator information;
- the capacity to link educator assignment information with educator certification information;
- common coding of courses and major areas of study;
- robust student information and a subset of elements to serve as a dropout early warning system;
- student data sufficiently disaggregated to permit monitoring the achievement gap;
- capacity to link educator information with student information;
- a common, standardized structure for reporting the costs of programs at the school and district level;
- information linking state funding formulas to school district budgeting and accounting, including procedures to support the accuracy and auditing of financial data; and
- information that is centrally accessible and updated regularly.

It is the Legislature's goal that all school districts have the capability to collect state-identified common data and export it in a standard format to support the K-12 data improvement system and that school districts collect and report new data elements to satisfy the requirements of the system only to the extent funds are available for this purpose.

K-12 Data Governance.

A K-12 Data Governance Group (Governance Group) is established within the OSPI to assist in the design and implementation of a K-12 education data improvement system for financial, student, and educator data.

The Governance Group has the following responsibilities:

- identify critical research and policy questions to be addressed by the K-12 data improvement system;
- create a comprehensive needs requirement document detailing the specific information and technical capacity needed by districts to meet the Legislature's expectations for a K-12 data improvement system;

- conduct a gap analysis of current and planned information compared to the needs requirement document;
- place a priority on financial and cost data necessary to support new K-12 financial models and on assuring the capacity to link data across systems; and
- define the operating rules and governance structure for K-12 data collection, including standards for privacy, data collection priorities, a standard data dictionary, ensuring data accuracy and compliance, and establishing minimum system standards.

The work of the Governance Group may be periodically reviewed and monitored by the Data Center and the LEAP. The OSPI must submit a preliminary report to the Legislature by November 15, 2009, including the analysis by the Governance Group and preliminary options for addressing identified gaps. A final report, including proposed phase-in and preliminary cost estimates for implementing a comprehensive data improvement system must be submitted by September 1, 2010.

Education Research and Data Center.

The Data Center, in consultation with the LEAP and the other participating education agencies, must identify the critical research and policy questions intended to be addressed by the Data Center and the data needed to address them. The Data Center must also monitor and evaluate the various data collection systems to ensure they are flexible, able to adapt to evolving needs for information, and include data that are needed to conduct the analyses of the critical research and policy questions identified.

The Data Center and the OSPI must take all actions necessary to secure federal funds to implement the bill.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:

A statement of legislative intent to have the Data Center and LEAP provide independent review and evaluation of the K-12 data system is removed. The Governance Group is established in the OSPI, not in the Data Center in the Office of Financial Management. A requirement is removed for the Data Center to annually submit a list of data elements to the Governance Group and for the Governance Group, within 3 months, to return a feasibility analysis for obtaining the data. The Legislature intends that the K-12 data system serve various information needs, with the benefits of additional data weighed against the costs to school districts to collect it, and remain focused on improving education. Specificity is removed from the list of expected data elements in the K-12 data improvement system, such as data elements related to individual classrooms, a list of educator certification information, a list of assessments for which student data is expected, separate accounting of revenues and courses by fund source, and a non-identifiable copy of data updated quarterly and made available to the public. An expectation is added for student data sufficiently disaggregated to monitor the achievement gap. Specificity is also reduced regarding data governance issues and operating rules. A requirement is removed for the OSPI, to the extent data is available, to post reports on the Internet including spending per student and by student calculated according to a specified algorithm; improvement in assessments by scale score; and other specified items.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This has been called a "data" bill, but it's really a "stories" bill because data tells stories. We know that Washington has large class sizes and our per-student funding continues to fall compared to other states. But we need to take a deeper look at the root causes. We can identify subgroups of underperforming students but can't answer questions about "why." There are lots of ideas about whether to increase our investment in education, and we can't afford to do them all. We have to do targeted interventions, and data is needed to identify the programs that are successful and can be leveraged. Collecting data is meaningless unless it can be fully analyzed to get these answers. Data provides current information about student achievement, which is very important to monitor. There should be tribal representation on the Governance Group because important decisions will be made using this data. The OSPI should lead the Governance Group. It is important to build flexibility and inter-operability in the new CEDARS system so that additional data elements can be added. Having clear governance will improve the quality of data, reduce duplication, and help identify key indicators and benchmarks. This sets up a way for all parties to move forward and provide a rational data system. Enhanced data will improve decision-making. There is concern about the costs. It is estimated that, in order to complete all the work envisioned in the bill, school districts would have to hire 346 additional full-time equivalent staff. It has been pointed out that the bill is "subject to funds available," but the impact could be significant. The way the data collection is set up in the beginning is crucial. We need to assure that we are collecting the right data for the right purposes.

(With concerns) Data is very important. It can tell you a lot, or it can tell you nothing at all. Some data will answer the question of "why" students are struggling, but there are questions that data cannot answer. And some data could be collected, but it will not be useful in the end. For example, information about a teacher's test score on a licensing exam is not necessarily useful. However, information about student mobility, socio-economic status, the number of languages spoken in a classroom, or how the principal is viewed as a leader could be very useful. How the data is used is as important as having it. The bill has a very large fiscal note. At a time when school districts don't have enough staff to do basic things, is it appropriate to impose additional data-entry responsibilities?

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Oemig, prime sponsor; Karen Condon, Colville Tribes; Peter Tamayo, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Marcia Fromhold, Washington School Information Processing Cooperative; Molly Boyajian, League of Education Voters; Mitch Denning, Alliance of Education Associations; and Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition.

(With concerns) Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.