

EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE

The Education Policy Committee was assigned three studies for the 2021-22 interim:

- Section 1 of House Bill No. 1111 (2021) directed a study of competency-based learning and schools participating in innovative education programs.
- Section 2 of Senate Bill No. 2332 (2021) directed a study of the criteria for alternative teacher licensure.
- House Concurrent Resolution No. 3009 (2021) directed a study of North Dakota Century Code provisions relating to compulsory school attendance, including a comparison of other states' compulsory school attendance laws.

The committee was assigned the responsibility to receive the following reports from the Superintendent of Public Instruction:

- A report regarding the study of interim education assessment systems, pursuant to Section 10 of Senate Bill No. 2141 (2021).
- A report on the outcome of the collaboration with workforce development stakeholders and the Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve Education Coordination Council on how to best integrate computer science and cybersecurity into curriculum, pursuant to Section 15.1-02-04(12).
- A report regarding updates and the collaborative report on the statewide prekindergarten through grade twelve education strategic vision, pursuant to Section 15.1-02-04(9).
- A report regarding proposed changes to the state accountability plan, pursuant to Section 15.1-02-17.
- A report regarding requests from a school or school district for a waiver of a school accreditation rule, pursuant to Section 15.1-06-08.
- A report regarding waiver applications, pursuant to Section 15.1-06-08.1.
- A report regarding the innovative education program, pursuant to Section 15.1-06-08.2.
- A report regarding the academic performance metrics of students participating in virtual instruction, pursuant to Section 15.1-07-25.4.
- A report on the learn everywhere program, pursuant to Section 15.1-07-35.
- A report regarding the compilation of test scores in reading and mathematics given annually to students statewide, pursuant to Section 15.1-21-10.
- A report regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the science of reading curriculum, pursuant to Section 15.1-21-12.1.
- A report with a recommendation on whether to continue the dyslexia screening pilot program beyond the 2022-23 school year, pursuant to Section 15.1-32-26.

The committee was assigned the responsibility to receive the following reports from the Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB):

- A report regarding electronic satisfaction survey results of all interactions with individuals seeking information or services from the board, pursuant to Section 15.1-13-36.
- A report regarding the number of teacher licenses issued under the alternative teacher certification program, the program's effectiveness, the quality of instruction provided under the program, and whether the program is accomplishing desired objectives, pursuant to Section 25 of Senate Bill No. 2265 (2019).

The committee was assigned the responsibility to receive the following reports from the Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve Education Coordination Council:

- A report regarding the council's activities, pursuant to Section 15.1-01-04(9).
- A report regarding the study of the council's membership, duties, and term limits, pursuant to Section 15 of House Bill No. 1388 (2021).

Committee members were Representatives Cynthia Schreiber-Beck (Chairman), LaurieBeth Hager, Patrick Hatlestad, Pat D. Heinert, Jeff A. Hoverson, Donald Longmuir, Andrew Marschall, David Monson, and David Richter and Senators David A. Clemens, Cole Conley, Jay R. Elkin, Doug Larsen, Diane Larson, Richard Marcellais, Jonathan L. Sickler, and Michael A. Wobbema.

Senator Erin Oban served as Chairman of the committee until her resignation from the Legislative Assembly in March 2022.

COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING AND INNOVATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM STUDY

Section 1 of House Bill No. 1111 directed the Legislative Management to study competency-based learning and schools participating in innovative education programs. The study included a review of the schools and districts participating in innovative education programs; the progress of schools and districts that received waivers to participate in innovative education programs and incorporate competency-based learning initiatives; and the contents of the innovative education programs, best practices, and whether competency-based learning initiatives under the innovative education programs can be duplicated and expanded for statewide implementation.

Background

There is a nationwide trend to transition away from "seat time" education toward competency-based learning in which students advance by demonstrating mastery of academic content. Competency-based learning provides schools the flexibility to award credit and provides students with personalized learning opportunities and allows students to work at their appropriate level regardless of age or grade level.

North Dakota Statutory Provisions

Section 15.1-06-08 permits a school or school district to apply to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for a waiver of a school accreditation rule if the waiver encourages innovation and has the potential of improving educational opportunities or enhancing students' academic opportunities. A waiver may be valid for up to 1 year, and a one-time extension of an additional year may be requested. The Superintendent must file a report with the Legislative Management regarding approved and denied waiver requests, including the rule waived, the reason the waiver was granted, and the time period for the waiver.

Section 15.1-06-08.1 prohibits the Superintendent of Public Instruction from waiving a statute unless expressly authorized by the section. A school or school district may apply for a waiver of certain school-related chapters, including chapters addressing calendar length and instructional time, teacher qualifications, school attendance, and curriculum, if the waiver improves the delivery or administration of education, provides increased educational opportunities for students, or improves students' academic success. An initial waiver may be valid for up to 1 year, and extensions may be requested. The Superintendent must file a report with the Legislative Management regarding approved and denied waiver requests, including the reason the waiver was granted and the time period for the waiver. The Superintendent also must adopt rules governing the submission and evaluation of waiver applications and waiver monitoring.

Section 15.1-06-08.2 requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt rules and develop criteria for the submission, approval, and evaluation of proposals for participation in an innovative education program. Schools must receive approval from the school board or governing board before submitting a proposal to the Superintendent to participate in an innovative education program. A proposal must include evaluation criteria and specify the innovations to be pursued and the manner in which the proposal will improve the delivery or administration of education, provide increased educational opportunities for students, or improve students' academic success. If approved, the school must develop a comprehensive implementation plan and work with the Superintendent to ensure the proposal's long-term viability during the 1st year in the program. The Superintendent may approve a comprehensive implementation plan for up to 5 years and must report annually to the Legislative Management regarding innovative education programs, including the status of implementation, a summary of waived statutes or rules, and a review of evaluation data results. The legislative history indicates the intent was to give schools more flexibility to identify student needs and implement programs to meet those needs. The legislative history also indicates the intent was not to provide waivers of educational standards, but to allow waivers and innovative education programs that provide flexibility in how the standards are met.

Other States' Innovative Education Programs

Other states permit competency-based learning or innovative education programs as an alternative to traditional seat time education, but requirements and criteria for the respective programs vary. For example, in Colorado, schools may submit innovation plans in areas, including school staffing, curriculum, assessments, class scheduling, and the use of financial resources, and the state board may waive related statutes or rules. In Michigan, school districts can apply for waivers from the minimum number of hours and days required for student instruction for a department-approved alternative education program or innovative program. Utah has implemented a competency-based learning grant program in which local education agencies apply for a grant and submit an application outlining the planned program

and providing evidence of the intent for schoolwide implementation. The local education agencies also may apply for a waiver of rules that hinder the agency from accomplishing the goals described in the grant application.

Testimony and Committee Considerations

Department of Public Instruction

The committee received testimony from representatives of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) regarding the innovative education program. According to the testimony, schools may apply for waivers from certain statutory requirements and receive flexibility in how the districts provide education if the waivers will improve the delivery or administration of education, provide increased educational opportunities for students, or improve students' academic success. The testimony indicated the program's flexibility allows schools to design alternate strategies to best meet students' needs. According to the testimony, seven school districts participate in the program, and four of those districts participate through a cohort that collaborates with the department and receives ongoing support for the programs. The testimony noted the department offers support and assistance to participating districts even if a district is not a part of the cohort.

North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders

The committee received testimony from a representative of the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders. According to the testimony, the council hosts the Innovation Academy to provide training in proficiency-based learning, innovative education, and ways to overcome obstacles to implementing innovative practices. The cost for attending is \$100 per person per day, and participating districts usually send five people to the 5-day academy. Almost 300 personnel from 42 school districts have attended the training.

Central Regional Education Association

The committee received testimony from a representative of the Central Regional Education Association regarding North Dakota full-service community schools, and the benefits and challenges of the full-service community school model. According to the testimony, a full-service community school is a school that collaborates with community partners to remove barriers to learning, provide equity to all students, and meet students' educational and noneducational needs by providing programs and services to schools and families, including health care and dental services. The federal Department of Education awarded a 5-year grant to Nexus-PATH Family Healing, a nonprofit organization providing community-based services for youth and families, to build, sustain, and expand a consortium for full-service community schools. Approximately 20 community partners work to provide eight types of services in schools through the project.

Other Stakeholder Testimony

The committee received testimony from a representative of Northern Cass School District regarding the district's innovative education program. According to the testimony, the district no longer uses letter grades or percentages to evaluate learners and instead uses a four-point evaluation scale in which a score of three means a student is proficient. The program focuses on pillars of personalized learning, and the district has implemented flexible curriculum with unique pacing for each student based on what is best for each student.

The committee received testimony from representatives of Bismarck Public Schools' Career Academy regarding the Career Academy's innovative education program called Empower[Ed]. According to the testimony, 38 students from area high schools are enrolled in the program. The program is a competency-based program that measures whether a student is engaged and proficient in a required content standard, but does not measure how much time a student spends in the classroom. The program allows students to earn core subject credits toward graduation through career and technical education courses at the Career Academy. The standards and levels of proficiency within the program are the same as in a traditional setting, but the methods of achieving the standards are different.

The committee received testimony from a representative of Garrison Public Schools regarding the district's innovative education program. According to the testimony, the district implemented a flexible, modular schedule in which classes have varying lengths and seat-time requirements. Students spend different amounts of time on curriculum each day depending on their individual progression toward proficiency of the relevant standard. The district provides Chromebooks to all students and offers paid internships for students with area businesses so students receive real-world experience to further develop necessary skills.

The committee received testimony from a representative of Wilton Public Schools regarding the district's innovative education program. The testimony indicated the district offers multitiered systems to provide academic and behavioral support and participates in the full-service community schools program.

The committee received testimony from a representative of Nexus-PATH Family Healing regarding its partnership with full-service community schools. The testimony indicated Nexus provides a variety of services to schools through the project, including placing social workers in schools, and its services are funded primarily through Medicaid, donations,

and grants. The average annual cost of placing a full-time licensed social worker in a school ranges from \$100,000 to \$120,000, and the school district is responsible only for 25 percent of the cost.

The committee received testimony from representatives of the Central Regional Education Association and Avel eCare regarding services provided by Avel eCare to full-service community schools. According to the testimony, the eCare School Health Program provides schools with all-day access to nurses through live audio and video connections.

The committee received testimony from a representative of the South East Education Cooperative regarding services provided by North Dakota Reading and Math Corps to full-service community schools. According to the testimony, tutors work in schools to ensure students are proficient readers by the third grade.

Conclusion

The committee makes no recommendation regarding its competency-based learning and innovative education program study.

ALTERNATIVE TEACHER LICENSING STUDY

Section 2 of Senate Bill No. 2332 directed the Legislative Management to study the criteria for alternative teacher licensure.

Background

There are several ways to become licensed to teach in North Dakota. The traditional method consists of receiving a bachelor's degree in education from an accredited institution; completing required teaching experience, including student teaching; obtaining a credential verifying qualifications; completing relevant examinations; applying for a license and paying relevant fees; and completing any additional required certifications or endorsements.

Alternative certification programs allow individuals to obtain a license outside the traditional pathway. Individuals only may be certified through Certification Central, the approved in-state alternative certification program for special education teachers, or through the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence, the only out-of-state alternative certification program currently satisfying statutory requirements. However, a teacher also may choose to enroll in an alternative certification program and obtain a teaching license in another state, depending on the specific state's rules, and then apply for an out-of-state license through the ESPB without going through the traditional licensing method or meeting state standards.

North Dakota Statutory Provisions

Section 15.1-13-10 requires the ESPB to establish criteria for teacher licensure and the process for issuing licenses. The section places requirements on in-state and out-of-state alternative teacher certification programs and requires the ESPB to issue an initial teaching license to an individual who possesses a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution, passes a criminal history record check, and completes an alternative teacher certification program.

Section 15.1-13-10.1 prohibits the ESPB from requiring individuals licensed to teach in other states to complete student teaching to become licensed in North Dakota, but the section is inapplicable to individuals who completed an alternative education program. Section 15.1-13-14 requires the ESPB to conduct criminal history record checks on applicants. Section 15.1-13-17 requires individuals to obtain a teaching license from the ESPB or be approved by the ESPB to teach in the state. Section 15.1-13-20 requires the ESPB to issue a 2- or 5-year teaching license to an applicant licensed or certified in another state if the other state's licensure or certification is based on a minimum of a bachelor's degree with a major that meets the issuing state's requirements in early childhood education, elementary education, middle education, or a content area taught at a public high school; the licensure or certification is based on the completion of a professional education program from a state-approved teacher education program and includes supervised student teaching; and the applicant pays the required fee and passes a criminal history record check.

Chapter 15.1-18 outlines teacher qualifications. Section 15.1-18-10 allows individuals to teach in specialty areas at any grade level from kindergarten through grade 8 if the individual is licensed by the ESPB, is approved to teach in the content area, and meets requirements set by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Section 15.1-18-10 also permits an individual to teach any subject except elementary education, special education, mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies if the individual has a high school diploma and a permit from the ESPB; has at least 4,000 hours of relevant work experience in the subject area to be taught over a 5-year period or possesses a certificate, permit, or degree in the subject area to be taught; and enrolls in the North Dakota Teacher Support System-approved mentor program.

Section 15.1-02-16 allows the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt rules governing the issuance of credentials to certain educators. Section 15.1-09-57 allows school districts and nonpublic schools to fill vacant positions with individuals not licensed in the course area if the individual is licensed or approved by the ESPB to teach other areas and the individual receives a temporary exception.

Other States' Licensing Requirements

Other states' requirements for teacher licenses and alternative teacher licensing vary. A 2020 report from the National Council on Teacher Quality indicated 46 states and the District of Columbia allow alternative certification programs. Only Alaska, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming do not permit some form of alternative teacher certification.

Testimony and Committee Considerations

Education Standards and Practices Board

The committee received testimony from a representative of the ESPB regarding alternative teacher certification programs. The testimony indicated the state is facing a teacher shortage, and alternative teacher licenses were developed in response to the national teacher shortage. According to the testimony, there are two state-approved alternative teacher certification programs. Section 15.1-13-10 allows an individual to obtain an initial teaching license if the individual has a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution and completes an alternative teacher certification program. The Education Standards and Practices Board has issued 21 licenses to individuals who completed an authorized out-of-state alternative teacher certification program. Section 15.1-18-10 also allows individuals who do not have a teaching license to teach noncore subjects if the individual obtains a permit from the ESPB and meets other criteria, including having at least 4,000 hours of relevant work experience in the subject area to be taught over the preceding 5 years. Testimony indicated the ESPB has issued 20 teaching permits under that framework, and the alternative licensing and permitting methods have helped mitigate the state's teacher shortage.

North Dakota United and DFM Research

The committee received testimony from representatives of North Dakota United and DFM Research regarding teacher survey results from January 2022. According to the testimony, approximately 80 percent of North Dakota teachers are North Dakota United members, only 25 percent of survey respondents indicated they have not considered leaving the teaching profession, and only 41 percent indicated they intend on retiring from the teaching profession.

Tennessee Teacher Residency Program

The committee received testimony from a representative of the Tennessee Department of Education regarding the Teacher Residency Program. According to the testimony, Tennessee's program was the first registered apprenticeship program for teaching approved by the United States Department of Labor. The program supports 650 future educators through federal and state funds, and the funds are used to pay for the college degree and credentialing of future teachers. According to the testimony, over 90 percent of the program's first cohort of teachers were retained.

Department of Public Instruction

The committee received testimony from a representative of DPI noting the department worked with Minot State University to use special education funds to create scholarships for 70 special education paraprofessionals to continue their education and become fully-licensed teachers. According to the testimony, the department is considering expanding the program to individuals who want to become elementary education teachers and also is considering seeking approval from the United States Department of Labor for an apprentice program similar to Tennessee's program.

Other Stakeholder Testimony

The committee received testimony from individuals who have completed alternative teacher licensing pathways. According to the testimony, one of the alternative teacher permit pathways allowed a participant to teach while being enrolled in school to receive a full teaching license. Testimony indicated the flexibility and self-paced nature of the Certification Central pathway allowed the participant to schedule coursework around other responsibilities and obligations. According to the testimony, without the availability of an alternative teacher certification program, one participant would have had to obtain additional coursework to become a licensed teacher, despite holding advanced degrees and having previous teaching experience at the college level in another state.

The committee noted the alternative teacher certification programs are not perfect, but the programs have helped address the teacher shortage, and program participants are making a positive impact. The committee also noted school districts may participate in the Career Builders program which provides matching funds to help businesses recruit and retain employees through scholarships or loan forgiveness.

Conclusion

The committee makes no recommendation regarding its alternative teacher licensure study.

COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE STUDY

House Concurrent Resolution No. 3009 directed the Legislative Management to study Century Code provisions relating to compulsory school attendance, including a comparison of other states' compulsory school attendance laws.

Background

Compulsory school attendance generally refers to the minimum and maximum age required by each state at which a student must be enrolled in and attending public school or an equivalent education program defined by the law. A form of compulsory school attendance has been required in North Dakota since 1883.

Chapter 15.1-20 outlines the state's compulsory school attendance laws. Section 15.1-20-01 requires a person responsible for a child between the ages of 7 and 16 to ensure the child attends a public school for the duration of each school year.

Section 15.1-20-02 provides exceptions to the compulsory attendance requirements. The exception criteria are:

- The child is in attendance for the same length of time at an approved nonpublic school;
- The child has completed high school;
- The child is necessary to the support of the child's family;
- A multidisciplinary team has determined the child has a disability that renders attendance or participation in a regular or special education program inexpedient or impracticable; or
- The child is receiving home education.

Section 15.1-20-02.1 outlines the criteria for determining if a child is deemed to be in attendance at school. To be deemed in attendance, a student may not be absent from school without an excuse for more than:

- 3 consecutive school days during the 1st half or 2nd half of a school or school district's calendar;
- 6 half days during the 1st half or 2nd half of a school or school district's calendar; or
- 21 class periods.

School districts and nonpublic schools are required to adopt policies to define excused absences and may withhold credit, remove students from courses, and take other punitive measures against students who fail to arrive in a timely fashion or who exceed a specific number of absences.

Section 15.1-20-03 requires teachers and administrators to enforce compulsory attendance. Teachers must notify the school administrator if a student is not in compliance with the chapter and administrators must initiate investigations of reported absences and report to local law enforcement if the person responsible for the student has failed to ensure the student is in attendance. A person who fails to ensure a student is in attendance is guilty of an infraction for a first offense and a Class B misdemeanor for subsequent offenses.

Other States' Attendance Laws

All 50 states have enacted compulsory attendance laws, but the age ranges of compulsory attendance and the exceptions vary. According to a state comparison published by the Education Commission of the States in August 2020, the ages for compulsory attendance under state laws range from age 5 to 19.

North Dakota Recent School Attendance Data

During the 2019-20 school year, 115,986 students were enrolled in prekindergarten through grade 12 in public schools in the state, the average daily student attendance was 96 percent, and the chronic absenteeism rate was 11 percent. Chronically absent students were defined as students who attended school for at least 10 days but missed 10 percent or more of their enrolled days during the school year.

Testimony and Committee Considerations

The committee received testimony from a representative of DPI and a member representing advisory cabinet stakeholder groups regarding compulsory school attendance laws. According to the testimony, the Superintendent of Public Instruction meets with advisory cabinet stakeholder groups every other month, and student attendance is discussed frequently. The testimony noted some 5- and 6-year-old students have sporadic school attendance, and 17- and 18-year-old students can drop out.

According to the testimony, the advisory cabinet stakeholder group reviewed the state's attendance rates, and chronically absent students, or students who are absent for more than 10 percent of the school year, represented 15 percent of students during the 2020-21 school year and accounted for nearly one-half of all absences. Testimony indicated students chronically absent for 1 year are at a higher risk of dropping out, and students who are chronically absent for at least 3 years have a graduation expectancy of less than 20 percent. The group compared North Dakota's compulsory attendance requirements to other states. According to the testimony, 38 states have a minimum compulsory attendance age of 5 or 6, and 12 states, including North Dakota, have a minimum compulsory attendance age of 7. Over

40 states require 10 or more years of compulsory school attendance, while North Dakota is one of six states requiring the fewest years of compulsory school attendance.

The advisory cabinet stakeholder group recommended lowering the minimum compulsory attendance age from age 7 to 6, adopting a uniform definition of chronic absenteeism, and funding a full-time equivalent position in DPI to monitor and reduce statewide chronic absenteeism.

Conclusion

The committee makes no recommendation regarding its compulsory school attendance study.

REPORT ON INTERIM EDUCATION ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS STUDY

The committee received a report from DPI regarding the interim education assessment systems study. Senate Bill No. 2141 (2021) required the Superintendent of Public Instruction to consult with education stakeholders and the Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve Education Coordination Council to study interim education assessment systems. The study required an evaluation and review of existing vendors, data standardization, statewide longitudinal data system compatibility, the costs associated with interim assessment systems, and the benefits of local and statewide interim assessment systems.

The committee was informed education stakeholders from across the state met to address the study objectives. According to the report, data collection of interim assessments administered across the state is difficult due to the large number of vendors being used and only a few vendors will share assessment data with the statewide longitudinal data system. The report indicated at least 15 vendors are used by school districts across the state. The report recommended school districts be required to administer interim assessments to students and a state-provided interim assessment be offered to public school districts. The report recommended school districts not be required to use the state-provided assessment tool, and if a district chose not to use the state-provided assessment, the district could select an interim assessment vendor from a state-approved list. The report indicated stakeholders involved in the study wanted school districts to maintain the ability to choose an interim assessment vendor and hoped the cost savings of using the state-provided interim assessment would incentivize districts to choose that option. According to the report, DPI could analyze the data provided by state-approved vendors, and DPI's data analysis could benefit smaller schools that may not have sufficient personnel or resources to analyze the data internally.

The committee reviewed a bill draft that would have required public school districts to annually administer two interim assessments in mathematics and reading to students in kindergarten through grade 10. The bill draft would have allowed school districts to use a state-provided interim assessment at no cost to the district, or select an interim assessment from a state-approved list. The bill draft would have required a vendor to share assessment data with the statewide longitudinal data system to qualify as a state-approved interim assessment vendor. The bill draft also would have provided that if a school district chose to use an interim assessment from the state-approved list, the district would be responsible for the cost of administering the assessment. A second bill draft was revised to clarify that if a district selected an interim assessment from a state-approved list, the district would be responsible for any assessment-related costs.

The committee expressed mixed opinions on the revised bill draft based on feedback received from some school administrators with concerns that school districts would not be allowed to use an interim assessment vendor of the district's choice. The committee was informed DPI only has received positive feedback because the revised bill draft allows school districts to maintain the ability to select an interim assessment vendor of the district's choice, and the revised bill draft would increase the availability of statewide data.

Recommendation

The committee recommends a bill draft [[23.0146.02000](#)] to require public school districts to administer interim assessments in mathematics and reading to students in kindergarten through grade 10 and use a state-provided interim assessment or an interim assessment from a state-approved list.

REPORT ON COMPUTER SCIENCE AND CYBERSECURITY CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

The committee received a report from DPI regarding the outcome of the collaboration with workforce development stakeholders and the Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve Education Coordination Council on how to best integrate computer science and cybersecurity into elementary, middle, and high school curriculum, pursuant to Section 15.1-02-04(12). According to the report, a task force of numerous stakeholders, including legislators and educators, was formed to address the integration of computer science and cybersecurity into curriculum. The task force recommended amending statutory provisions to include computer science and cybersecurity into curriculum for the elementary, middle, and high school levels, requiring each school district to adopt a computer science and cybersecurity integration plan,

requiring students graduate with knowledge and skills in computer science and cybersecurity, and making support and training available for professional development.

The committee reviewed a bill draft that would have required elementary, middle, and high schools to provide computer science and cybersecurity instruction and to develop integration plans that would need to be approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The bill draft also would have added a unit of computer science or cybersecurity as an additional requirement for obtaining a high school diploma. A second bill draft was revised to clarify the additional computer science or cybersecurity requirement for obtaining a high school diploma.

Committee members expressed concern the proposed timeline for adding an additional computer science and cybersecurity requirement for high school graduation was too tight for schools to implement, and smaller schools may have difficulty finding staff willing to complete additional training or teach additional courses. Committee members noted school administrators had contacted members with similar concerns. Committee members acknowledged computer science and cybersecurity instruction for students is relevant and important, but noted concerns that adding more requirements on schools and educators would be viewed as another statewide mandate on an already overburdened education system. Committee members indicated a desire to have the revised bill draft scaled back to make it more palatable to school districts and educators and to have DPI introduce a revised version during the upcoming legislative session.

Conclusion

The committee makes no recommendation regarding the report on computer science and cybersecurity curriculum integration.

ADDITIONAL REPORTS

The committee received a report from DPI regarding updates and the collaborative report on the statewide prekindergarten through grade twelve education strategic vision, pursuant to Section 15.1-02-04(9). The strategic vision was developed through input provided by a steering committee of legislators and representatives of state-level education entities and stakeholders. The report included updates on the strategic themes including quality early childhood experiences, education personnel, and student-centered instruction; support for safe and healthy behaviors; and career awareness, exploration, and development.

The committee received reports from DPI regarding requests from schools or school districts for waivers of school accreditation rules, pursuant to Section 15.1-06-08, and waiver applications, pursuant to Section 15.1-06-08.1. The report indicated 15 schools or school districts are operating on a waiver.

The committee received a report from DPI regarding the innovative education program, including the status of the implementation plan, a summary of any waived statutes or rules, and a review of evaluation data results, pursuant to Section 15.1-06-08.2. The report indicated seven school districts participate in the innovative education program.

The committee received a report from DPI regarding the academic performance metrics of students participating in virtual instruction, pursuant to Section 15.1-07-25.4. According to the report, during the COVID-19 pandemic, instructional approaches varied and, overall, students who participated in distance learning experienced more learning decline than those who participated in hybrid learning, and students participating in neither performed closer to pre-pandemic expectations.

The committee received a report from DPI regarding the learn everywhere program, pursuant to Section 15.1-07-35. The report indicated the program allows schools to offer course credit for educational opportunities that occur outside the classroom with a sponsoring entity. According to the report, one proposal was received and approved for the 2022-23 school year from the Northern Cass School District to partner with Comligo USA, an online platform specializing in live Spanish classes for students.

The committee received a report from DPI regarding the compilation of test scores of a test aligned to the state content standards in reading and mathematics given to students statewide, pursuant to Section 15.1-21-10. According to the report, the 2020-21 assessment reflected an overall student proficiency of 42 percent in English language arts and 38 percent in mathematics across all grade levels.

The committee received a report from DPI regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the science of reading curriculum in improving students' educational outcomes and reading competency, pursuant to Section 15.1-21-12.1. The report indicated the law requires professional development training for kindergarten through third grade principals and teachers. According to the report, DPI provided an in-person training conference in July 2022, over 300 professionals attended, and 155 of the attendees earned professional development credit. Each elementary school must report to DPI before October 1, 2022, if a teacher is trained, untrained, or if the teacher's training is ongoing.

The committee received a report from DPI regarding whether to continue the dyslexia screening pilot program beyond the 2022-23 school year, pursuant to Section 15.1-32-26. According to the report, several pilot program districts use multi-tiered support systems to implement plans to incorporate dyslexia screening into their existing educational system and to ensure students identified as at-risk do not fall behind academically. The report included a recommendation to continue the pilot program and expand it statewide if the necessary legislation and funding is approved.

The committee received a report from the ESPB regarding electronic satisfaction survey results of all interactions with individuals seeking information or services from the board, pursuant to Section 15.1-13-36. The report indicated each applicant interaction with the ESPB provides an opportunity to respond to the survey, and the survey response areas include questions regarding timeliness, availability, courtesy, knowledge, staff responsiveness, and the ease of obtaining information and services. According to the report, 135 applicants responded to the survey and over 82 percent of respondents rated their interactions as "excellent."

The committee received a report from the ESPB regarding the number of teacher licenses issued under the alternative teacher certification program, the program's effectiveness, the quality of instruction provided under the program, and whether the program is accomplishing desired objectives. According to the report, the ESPB has issued 21 licenses under the program, and it was recommended that the program continue.

The committee received reports from the Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve Education Coordination Council regarding the council's activities, pursuant to Section 15.1-01-04(9), and the study of the council's membership, duties, and term limits. The report included recommendations to change the makeup of the council, increase the number of required meetings, and clarify the council's role.