

HB 2194 -- SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

SPONSOR: McNeil

This bill changes the laws regarding school accreditation. In its main provisions, the bill:

(1) Sets an August 1 birthday cutoff for three-year-olds to attend prekindergarten programs;

(2) Requires the school buildings in an unaccredited district to be accredited individually;

(3) Requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to create:

(a) Improvement teams for provisionally accredited and unaccredited districts. The department has discretion to select the team members and the team's duties include but are not limited to resource analysis, needs assessment, improvement of leadership and staff stability and evaluation, student data analysis, and curriculum analysis; and

(b) School improvement action committees at each provisionally accredited or unaccredited school, to consist of the principal, two teachers, two parents, a noncertificated employee, two community members representing nonprofit organizations and other members as needed, to recommend school climate, discipline, and culturally responsive instruction improvements, expand community-school efforts, establish a parent and family resource center in each school, and identify and establish programs to meet parental needs;

(4) Requires the identification of any underperforming schools in a provisionally accredited district and the development of interventions, which may include a school improvement action committee. The State Board of Education must classify a provisionally accredited district as unaccredited if the district does not show sustained growth within five years;

(5) Requires the department to develop and implement a grant program for unaccredited and provisionally accredited school districts that commit to extended school time to improve academic achievement. The grants will be for a two-year term and will be renewable for three additional terms. An applicant must demonstrate that it has analyzed its current use of instructional time, including the effects on student achievement and personnel assignments, and provide a rationale for the method of adding time. Grant awards will be proportional to the amount of additional time over the minimum instruction time required by law and the average

daily attendance rate of the affected students with priority given to unaccredited districts. The Extended Instructional Time Fund is created to be administered by the department for the deposit of moneys appropriated to it by the General Assembly and may include any gifts, contributions, or bequests;

(6) Allows the inclusion of three- and four-year-olds who are eligible for free and reduced lunch and attend an early childhood education program that is operated by a district or charter school that provides full-day kindergarten and which meets state standards in the average daily attendance calculation for the district, not to exceed 4% of the total number of pupils. These provisions become effective in unaccredited districts July 1, 2014, or as soon as the accreditation declaration is made subsequently, and in provisionally accredited districts July 1, 2015, or as soon after July 1, 2015 as the accreditation declaration is made for districts that are subsequently declared unaccredited. For other school districts, the provisions become effective in the school year after the foundation formula is fully funded;

(7) Restores the statute on transfers to refer only to transfers of a high-school-age student from a K-8 district to a district with a high school; and

(8) Closes the student transfer program to any district that did not have students transferring out in school year 2013-14 while allowing only those students who participated during that year to finish the program in the building they are currently attending and:

(a) Sets tuition at the statewide adequacy target times the dollar value modifier, applying any proration and adding the Proposition C funds for each transfer student;

(b) Requires the unaccredited district to attempt to find space in an accredited school within the district;

(c) Requires receiving school districts to set student-teacher ratios and class sizes so that the district is not required to hire additional teachers or build new classrooms; and

(d) Permits students, within the limits of the law, to attend the school of their choice.