

One Hundred Second Legislature - First Session - 2011

Introducer's Statement of Intent

LB247

Chairperson: Senator Greg Adams

Committee: Education

Date of Hearing: January 25, 2011

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

LB 247 adopts the Classrooms First Act. The purpose of the bill is to require that school districts make spending on education at the classroom level the number one priority and mission. The bill includes an intervention process to assist school districts in meeting that goal.

The bill requires each school district in the state to spend at least 65% of its operating funds on direct classroom instruction. Direct classroom instruction is defined in the bill as the total amount spent by a school district on:

- regular instructional programs,
- limited English proficiency programs,
- poverty programs,
- early childhood educational programs, and
- special education instructional programs.

Under current state law, each school district reports its expenditures under these categories to the State Department of Education annually. This bill does not create any new reporting or any new categories. These categories are defined in the Department's Users' Manual for school accounting purposes. The Department also uses these categories in its annual online State of the Schools Report. They are the same categories required for federal funding purposes.

Under the bill, if a school district is unable to meet the 65% spending threshold, the Commissioner of Education will be required to establish an intervention team to work with the school board, the superintendent, and other school officials to adjust their spending. The State Board of Education is currently developing a similar plan for intervention teams related to schools who perform poorly under school

accountability standards. This bill does not create a new procedure for intervention teams. Intervention teams are also a strategy required under the US Department of Education’s Guidance on School Improvement Grants as part of its “turnaround model” for school districts that accept federal funds.

If a district is unable to meet the 65% requirement for three years in a row, the bill specifies that the school district will lose its school accreditation.

The Commissioner of Education is granted authority to waive the accreditation loss if the district implements a plan to address its spending priorities.

The 65% requirement begins September 1, 2012. The consecutive three year requirement would first apply to the school years 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14.

Principal Introducer: _____

Senator Rich Pahls