

Legislative Report, March 2, 2008

You have no doubt all heard coming out of the Legislature about the passage of the transportation bill and the non-confirmation of the Department of Transportation Commissioner. However, much more is happening which you probably have not heard about. Thus, let's touch upon some of those happenings.

The Minnesota School Social Workers are putting forth a bill this session which would direct the Minnesota Department of Education to offer grants to implement social emotional learning curriculum, training and standards.

During the last legislative session a task force was put in place by the Legislature which was directed to recommend which state laws and rules that exceed or expand upon minimum federal special education requirements for providing special education programs and services to eligible students should be amended to conform with minimum federal requirements. This task force was established, met several times, and developed a report of its work, which was unfinished. The report was scheduled to be heard in the House about a week and a half ago but was not. The Legislature last week directed the task force to complete its work and to report back to the Legislature next year

Representative Sandra Peterson introduced a bill early this session which would establish an Office of Early Learning. This is HF 2983. The same Representative introduced another bill, HF 3290, which would address school readiness assessments and kindergarten transition strategies.

Representative Lanning introduced a bill which would continue and expand the work of the Search Institute in certain communities in the State of Minnesota. This is HF 2185. Dr. Peter Benson is the President of the Search Institute and he testified on the bill.

Senators Saltzman and G. Olson introduced a bill, SF 3156, which outlines what constitutes comprehensive, scientifically based reading instruction in the State of Minnesota and would require a person to successfully complete a Minnesota reading instruction competence assessment before being granted an initial teaching license to provide direct instruction to pupils in prekindergarten or elementary programs

Representative Norton introduced HF 2623 which would required that state's testing contractor to provide that school districts would receive assessment results no later than the Friday of the first full week in May.

Representative Bly introduced HF 2982 which would set up a five-year pilot program for identifying systemic improvement measures to best serve students enrolled in alternative learning centers and charter schools.

Representative Brynaert and Senator Rummel have introduced legislation (HF 3329 and SF 2882) which would add individual student growth measurement to the state report card, in addition to the federally mandated student academic achievement.

And finally, the State Department of Education has a technical bill which will be heard in the Senate Education Policy Committee this week. One of the changes is centered on IDEA prohibiting the exemption of students with extreme physical and cognitive impairments from the Minnesota Academic Standards and NCLB not allowing for the IEP team to establish alternative achievement standards. Thus, the new language being proposed would read as follows: For purposes of applicable federal law, the academic standards for language arts, mathematics, and science apply to all public school students with appropriate alternative achievement standards based on these academic standards for students with individualized education plans as described in federal law. This entire technical bill is SF 3001. The above change is outlined in Section 2 of Article 2, page 13, 13.12 thru 13.18.

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