

HCS SS SCS SB 894 -- EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

SPONSOR: Nodler (Baker, 123)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Special Committee on Student Achievement and Finance by a vote of 8 to 0.

This substitute changes the laws regarding educational standards and guidelines. In its main provisions, the substitute:

(1) Requires school districts that have a levy lower than the performance levy of \$3.43 to certify to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education that they are providing an adequate education. If the district asserts it is not providing an adequate education, the presumption is that insufficient local effort is causing the inadequacy (Section 163.021, RSMo);

(2) Requires districts to adopt anti-bullying policies containing elements specified in the substitute (Section 160.775);

(3) Requires the department to establish guidelines for early childhood education programs in Title I or Missouri Preschool Project schools that focus on well prepared teachers, cognitive, language, social and emotional development, and assessment of family needs (Section 161.213);

(4) Requires the department to establish guidelines for a Missouri Virtual Public School pilot project by July 1, 2007, and specifies fiscal and accountability requirements for the project (Section 161.670); and

(5) Requires the department to initiate a ready to work certificate for high school seniors who volunteer to meet standards that indicate they are ready for entry-level employment (Section 1).

The provision requiring certain school districts to certify to the department that they are providing an adequate education contains an emergency clause.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Cost on General Revenue Fund of \$96,466 in FY 2007, \$102,146 to Unknown in FY 2008, and \$104,698 to Unknown in FY 2009. No impact on Other State Funds in FY 2007, FY 2008, and FY 2009.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill gives school districts the chance to assert their adequacy. The bill is an outgrowth of the ongoing school finance litigation.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Nodler; and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say it could have the unintended consequence of undercutting the state's position in the adequacy lawsuit, being viewed as intimidating, highlighting some districts' inability to reach the performance levy, and weakening the non-tax-driven aspect of the foundation formula enacted by Senate Bill 287 in 2005.

Others testifying on the bill was Missouri National Education Association.

Becky DeNeve, Senior Legislative Analyst