

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: SJM 14

51st Legislature, 1st Session, 2013

Tracking Number: .191354.2

Short Title: Study New Approaches to Education Reform

Sponsor(s): Senator William E. Sharer

Analyst: Travis Dulany

Date: March 14, 2013

Bill Summary:

SJM 14 requests that Legislative Council form a task force to study the “failures of the current educational system and the efficacy of a trifurcated diploma system.” The requested task force is to be composed of:

- legislators;
- school superintendents;
- other school personnel;
- school board members;
- public postsecondary educational institutions;
- the business community;
- parents; and
- taxpayers.

Additionally, SJM 14 requests that the task force:

- study the state’s public school funding formula and make recommendations on changing the formula to comport with systematic recommendations;
- study the current governance structure and make recommendations for the devolution of governance responsibility to the local level;
- be allowed to name subcommittees of its members to focus on different areas of the *Public School Code* “with an eye to repealing provisions that are incompatible with local control and governance”; and
- report its findings and recommendations to the 1st Session of the 52nd Legislature, including recommendations for constitutional and statutory changes necessary to implement other recommendations of the task force.

Finally, the joint memorial:

- notes that the Public Education Department (PED), public schools, and public postsecondary educational institutions are “strongly urged” to assist the task force in its work; and
- requests that the Legislative Council Service, Legislative Education Study Committee, and Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) provide staff to support the task force.

Fiscal Impact:

Legislative memorials do not contain appropriations.

Memorials requesting the formation of task forces in order to conduct studies are likely to have a fiscal impact in terms of staff time, travel, office supplies, and other items.

Fiscal Issues:

SJM 14 suggests the consideration of a trifurcated diploma system that provides three levels of high school diploma:

1. a basic education diploma;
2. a trades-ready diploma; and
3. a baccalaureate-ready diploma.

The joint memorial further suggests that, because the educational and staffing requirements differ for each of the three levels of diploma, school districts should be funded commensurate with the types of diplomas for which they are preparing their students. The implementation of this trifurcated system may cause issues of inequity among districts and raise questions with regard to the state's constitutional obligation to provide "a uniform system of free public schools sufficient for the education of, and open to, all children of school age in the state."

Further, as noted in the LFC Fiscal Impact Report (FIR), this type of funding system may have the implication of funding districts with a high percentage of students who are minority and from low income backgrounds at a lower level than districts with students from higher income backgrounds.

The FIR notes that funding schools based on a trifurcated diploma system:

- will change substantially the way schools are funded and may result in redistribution of public education funding among school districts and charter schools; and
- may result in the loss of federal Impact Aid payments if the new funding system results in wide differences in per-student funding at the school district or charter school level across the state.

Substantive Issues:

According to PED, if the proposed trifurcated system of graduation requirements is enacted, current departmental initiatives would be affected, including the Common Core State Standards professional development; dual credit; Advanced Placement; and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics initiatives.

Committee Referrals:

SRC/SEC

Related Bills:

None as of March 14, 2013.