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Senate Bill 40 (as enrolled)

Sponsor: Senator John J. H. Schwarz, M.D.

Senate Committee: Education and Mental Health

House Committee: Education

Date Completed: 9-18-89

PUBLIC ACT 159 of 1989**RATIONALE**

Many of today's high school graduates reportedly do not know when the Civil War was fought, never read Shakespeare, are ignorant of basic scientific principles, are deficient in understanding geography, and have difficulty with mathematic computations. Cries are echoing across the nation that America has become a land of illiterates, and that this country does not measure up to other nations that it must compete with in the global market. Michigan has had a long tradition of providing quality education to all citizens. This tradition of educational excellence, some people believe, is in jeopardy. While disparity between the resources available to different school districts within the State is growing, it is argued, there is greater demand to prepare students for a changing economic and technological society. Some contend that Michigan has fallen from its position as a national education leader, and as part of the efforts to improve the quality of education in this State, there should be greater accountability to the public concerning the performance of the public schools.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the School Code to require the board of a school district to prepare, publicly announce, and make available to the public and the State Board of Education an annual educational report, which would have to include information specified in the bill for each public school in the district. If a district prepared an annual educational report, each school in that district would be required to distribute an annual

educational report for that particular school. Within 90 days after the bill's effective date, the State Board would be required to prepare and make available to school districts suggestions for accumulating the required information, a model educational report for school districts to consider in implementing the bill, and a form for reporting pupil suspensions and expulsions that assured an accurate account of the total number of suspensions and expulsions in a school district. The bill would take effect 30 days after being enacted, and is tie-barred to House Bill 4009, which would permit a school board to adopt a core curriculum as well as adopt and implement a school improvement plan for each school in a district.

Annual Educational Report

The annual educational report would have to include, but not be limited to, all of the following information for each public school in the school district:

- The accreditation status of each school within the district, the process by which pupils were assigned to particular schools, and a description of each specialized school.
- The status of the three- to five-year school improvement plan, as proposed in House Bill 4009, for each school within the district, if the district had a school improvement plan.

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- A copy of the core curriculum, as proposed in House Bill 4009, and a description of its implementation, if the district had a core curriculum.
- A report for each school of aggregate student achievement based on the results of any locally-administered student competency tests, statewide assessment tests, or nationally-normed achievement tests that were given to pupils attending school in the district.
- For the year in which the report was filed and the previous school year, the number and percentage of pupils, identified by age, grade level, ethnicity, and gender, and whether they received special education services, who were suspended from any school in the school district for a total of at least three days during the school year, the length of each suspension for each pupil, the reason for each suspension, and whether the suspension affected the pupil's academic standing through the loss of credit or lowered grades.
- For the year in which the report was filed and the previous school year, the number and percentage of pupils 18 years of age or younger, identified by age, grade level, ethnicity and gender, and whether they received special education services, who were expelled from any school in the school district, the length of each expulsion, whether the expulsion was permanent, and whether the opportunity for alternative education was made available to the pupil.
- For the previous year, the number and percentage of school dropouts, as defined by the State Board, in the school district, identified by age, grade level, ethnicity, and gender, and any process for identifying and serving at-risk pupils and dropouts.
- For the year in which the report was filed and the previous school year, the number of pupils, identified at the elementary, middle, and secondary school levels, who were enrolled in the school in that district, as of the official count day and two other days, no count being made within six weeks of another.
- The number and percentage of households with pupils enrolled in the school district that participated in parent-teacher conferences for pupils at the elementary, middle, and secondary school level.

- The number and percentage of adults, both parents and adults without children, who served as volunteers in school classrooms, libraries, lunch rooms, and playgrounds, or in other ways.

In order to gather information on suspensions and expulsions, a school district would be required to use the form developed by the State Board or a form adopted by the school district and approved by the State Board.

Report to the Public

If a school board acted under the bill's provisions on preparing an annual educational report, the school board would be required to provide that each school in the district distribute to the public at an open meeting an annual educational report for that school, which would have to be made available to the general public. The report would have to include, but not be limited to, all of the following information:

- The aggregate student achievement based on the results of any locally administered student competency tests, statewide assessment tests, or nationally normed achievement tests that were given to pupils attending the school.
- The number of pupils in each grade and the number of pupils working at, below, and above grade level in core curriculum subjects in each grade.
- A copy of the core curriculum adopted by the school district and the school and a description of its implementation, including the progress made in each grade in covering core curriculum subjects.
- If applicable, for the previous year, the number and percentage of school dropouts, as defined by the State Board, in the school district, and identified by grade level.
- A comparison with the previous school year of all reported categories.

MCL 380.6 et al.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Department of Education would incur minimal costs in making suggestions and a model report available to local school districts.

A local school district would incur minimal costs in preparing the report required under Section 1204a; because the report would be mandated by the State, the costs would be reimbursable by the State.

ARGUMENTS

Supporting Argument

The State's future depends on the development of an educational system that is excellent in quality and effective in outcome. The Michigan School Finance Commission--appointed by the State Board of Education in February 1987 to review school finance and equal educational opportunities--noted in its September 1987 report that schools, provided with appropriate guidance and resources, would be able and willing to improve the quality of educational opportunity and results. To accomplish this, however, schools need assistance, resources, and educational standards, while the public needs to be fully informed about these schools' activities and outcomes. Senate Bill 40 would require a local school board to prepare and make available to the public an annual educational report. This requirement would ensure that school districts were accountable to the people they serve, and would provide an extension of current financial reporting to constituents of a school district by requiring the district to report curriculum information, student test results, enrollment data, and dropout information.

Opposing Argument

The impact this bill would have on the educational system in the State is not certain, since many school districts already are fulfilling the bill's requirements. For example, school boards are required under the School Code to publish a financial report (MCL 380.1203) and annually report to the State Board of Education (MCL 380.1204).

Response: Senate Bill 40 would encourage greater accountability to the public by school districts by expanding the nature of information provided to district residents on an annual basis. Furthermore, by requiring the annual reporting of certain dropout information, the bill would improve on the current voluntary biennial reporting of student dropout information. In addition, the compilation and reporting of this type of information would be of great importance and use to the State and local districts.

Opposing Argument

Several provisions in the bill have raised concerns. Some people believe that it is not absolutely clear that a school board would have to prepare an annual educational report. While Section 1204a would require a school board to prepare and make available an annual report, Section 1204b provides for the distribution of a report by schools if the board prepared the annual report under section 1204a. Furthermore, it also is not clear why two educational reports should have to be produced since the districtwide report would have to provide information for each school in the district as well as for the total district. Further, the bill would require that statistics on suspended students reflect whether the suspension affected a pupil's academic standing, but that determination could be difficult to make. Finally the bill is tie-barred to House Bill 4009, which is not considered as strong as Senate Bills 39 and 43. The Senate bills would require a school board to make available a core curriculum as well as adopt and implement a school improvement plan, while House Bill 4009 merely would permit a local district to take these actions.

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.