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BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 307 (Substitute S-2 as reported)
Sponsor: Senator Nancy Cassis
Committee: Education

Date Completed: 11-18-03

RATIONALE

Educators often stress the need for parents to participate in their child's education, and most public schools do recruit parents to volunteer in the classroom, serve in Parent-Teacher Associations, and chaperone field trips. Nonetheless, some parents report that they feel unwelcome in their child's school, and some schools evidently do not encourage parents to become involved. It has been suggested that requiring all schools to implement a parental involvement plan would be an important step toward increasing parental participation and student achievement.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Revised School Code to require the board of a school district or intermediate school district, or the board of directors of a public school academy, to adopt and implement, by the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, a parent involvement plan designed to encourage parental participation.

The board or board of directors would have to provide a copy of the plan to the parent or legal guardian of each pupil. The board could meet this requirement by including the policy in its student handbook or a similar publication distributed to all pupils and parents. Upon request of the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), the board would have to provide a copy of the plan to the Department. The Department would have to review parental involvement practices that had been implemented by public schools in the State and elsewhere, and post on the MDE website information about successful parental involvement policies and practices.

Proposed MCL 380.1294

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

Graduate students in Wayne State University's Educational Psychology program conducted a review of current research to investigate the relationship between student success and "parental involvement" (which was not defined uniformly across the studies). Their review of the literature indicated that students with parents involved in their education had higher standardized tests scores, higher grade point averages, and greater skill mastery in all elementary school subjects than did students with low parental involvement. Additionally, children of involved parents were more likely to have a positive academic "self-concept", pursue education beyond high school, and cooperate with others more than students with parents who were not involved. Students with parents who were less (or not at all) involved with their education were more likely to participate in bullying and drug use. Clearly, it is important that parents be involved in their child's education and that schools have in place a plan to promote this. A plan could be as simple as encouraging parents to participate in parent-teacher conferences, attend school functions, and help with their child's homework.

Opposing Argument

Mandating that parents be involved does not necessarily increase parental involvement. Reportedly, some Detroit schools of choice have required parents to sign a contract agreeing to participate in their child's education; nevertheless, some parents failed to do so. While everyone presumably agrees that it is better for parents to be involved, the reasons why they are not are complex, and

unlikely to respond to a quick fix.

Response: The bill would place the responsibility on schools, not on parents, to generate a plan to encourage involvement. Under the bill, each school board would have to decide how to encourage parental involvement in its buildings. While it is true that mandates do not solve social problems, the bill would require schools to examine the barriers preventing parents from being more involved.

Legislative Analyst: Claire Layman

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State government. Though there could be a small cost in the printing and distribution of the plan to all parents and legal guardians, the cost should be minimal. There are currently nearly 1.7 million pupils statewide and if cost were 0.5 cent per copy of a one-page plan, the total cost statewide for printing and distribution would be \$8,500.

Fiscal Analyst: Joe Carrasco

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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.