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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 306

Offered January 9, 2013

Prefiled January 8, 2013

Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to study the effects on third grade Standards of Learning (SOL) achievement levels of increasing classroom instruction time in reading and mathematics in lieu of participating in SOL assessments in science and in history and social science.

Patron—Miller

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, most third grade students at public elementary schools in the Commonwealth participate in SOL assessments in reading, in mathematics, in science and in history and social science; and

WHEREAS, preparing for and taking assessments in science and in history and social studies takes time away from other areas, including the important subjects of reading and mathematics, and may adversely affect the educational experience and academic achievement of some students; and

WHEREAS, a pilot program to study the achievement levels of third grade students who do not participate in the SOL assessments in science and in history and social studies and who instead receive additional classroom instructional time in reading and mathematics would provide the Board of Education with data useful for the Board's regular review and revision of the Standards of Learning pursuant to § 22.1-253.13:1; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That JLARC be directed to study the effects on third grade SOL achievement levels of increasing classroom instruction time in reading and mathematics in lieu of participating in SOL assessments in science and in history and social science.

In conducting its study, JLARC shall select 16 local school divisions—two local school divisions in each of the eight Superintendent's Regions identified by the Board of Education—to participate in a pilot program in which certain elementary schools in each selected local school division shall not administer the SOL assessments in science and in history and social science to third grade students, notwithstanding § 22.1-253.13:3 or any other provision of law to the contrary. Such elementary schools shall continue to administer benchmark assessments in science and in history and social science. JLARC staff shall ensure that selected local school divisions represent a fair cross section of students in all student subgroups identified pursuant to the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, P.L. 89-10, as amended, including the African American, Hispanic, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged student subgroups. In addition, JLARC staff shall ensure that selected local school divisions represent a fair cross section of urban, suburban, and rural areas.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall notify the local school divisions that have been selected to participate in the pilot program. The school boards in these local school divisions shall select at least two elementary schools in the local school division to participate in the pilot program. The school boards shall also identify a peer elementary school in the local school division with similar student demographics to be paired, for control group purposes, with each elementary school selected to participate in the pilot program.

Elementary schools that have been selected to participate in the pilot program shall use the additional instruction time for study in reading and mathematics. Elementary schools that have been selected to participate in the pilot program shall notify the parents of all third grade students that their child will not participate in SOL assessments in science and in history and social science and will instead receive additional instruction in reading and mathematics.

The pilot program shall be effective for two years, beginning with the 2013-2014 school year and concluding at the end of the 2014-2015 school year. At the conclusion of the pilot program, the Board of Education shall provide JLARC staff with (i) a list of the elementary schools selected to participate in the pilot program, (ii) a list of the peer elementary schools identified by the school boards, (iii) a list of the third grade teachers at each selected elementary school who participated in the pilot program, (iv) a de-identified list of the results of third grade students who participated in the pilot program on SOL assessments in reading and mathematics, and (v) a de-identified list of the results, for each year of the pilot program, of third grade students at the peer elementary schools identified by the school boards on SOL assessments in reading and mathematics. The Board shall ensure that the student-level data collected is identified in such a way that student performance can be tracked across multiple years while the identities of such students remain private.

JLARC staff shall administer a survey to the third grade students who participated in the pilot

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59 program to obtain information on the students' attitudes on foregoing the SOL assessments in science.
60 JLARC staff shall administer a survey to the third grade teachers who participated in the pilot program
61 to obtain information on (a) how each teacher used the additional instructional time, (b) how much time
62 each teacher spent teaching science and how much time each teacher spent teaching history and social
63 science, (c) each teacher's opinion about the advisability of continuing and expanding the pilot program,
64 and (d) how, if at all, forgoing the administration of the SOL assessments in science and in history and
65 social science improved the educational experience and academic achievement of their students.

66 JLARC shall compare the assessment results of the pilot program participants with the control group
67 students, analyze the results of the teacher surveys, and determine the effect of increasing classroom
68 instruction time in reading and mathematics in lieu of participating in SOL assessments in science and
69 in history and social science.

70 Technical assistance shall be provided to JLARC by the Board of Education. All agencies of the
71 Commonwealth shall provide assistance to JLARC for this study, upon request.

72 JLARC shall complete its meetings for the first year by November 30, 2014 and shall complete the
73 study by November 30, 2015, and the Chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated
74 Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the
75 Regular Session of the General Assembly for each year. The executive summaries shall state whether
76 JLARC intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and
77 recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summaries and reports
78 shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for
79 the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's
80 website.