

Senate Education Committee

Ava Hawkes 271-4151

HB 321, requiring school districts to submit an annual report concerning gifted and talented students.

Hearing Date: April 27, 2021

Time Opened: 11:06 a.m.

Time Closed: 11:22 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Ward, Hennessey, Ricciardi, Kahn and Prentiss

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill requires all public schools to submit annual reports to the department of education detailing the policies, programs, and procedures that are in place to identify and accommodate the needs of gifted and talented students.

Sponsors:

Rep. Moffett

Rep. Pearl

Rep. Lang

Rep. Shaw

Rep. Pitre

Rep. Hobson

Sen. Giuda

Sen. D'Allesandro

Who supports the bill: Senator Bob Giuda, Representative Rick Ladd, Representative Erica Layon, Representative Michael Moffett, Representative Deborah Hobson, Kate Shea, Moira Ryan, Liz Tentarelli, Ann Marie Banfield

Who opposes the bill: Becky Wilson, Jerry Frew, Russell Holden, David Doherty

Who is neutral on the bill: Eric Pauer

Summary of testimony presented:

Representative Michael Moffett – Rockingham, District 9

- Representative Moffett introduced HB 321.
- This bill calls for a best practices folder, virtual or otherwise, for NHDOE and districts to share policies or initiatives that address the unique needs of talented or gifted students.
- There is no policy mandate or spending requirement.
- There is no expectation that anyone process information.
- It simply involves exchanging good ideas.

- He used to teach at a high school where there was a math club, this is a perfect example of an initiative that supports talented or gifted students.
- Localities will determine what they feel are talented or gifted students.
- This bill's requirement could be satisfied in a few minutes.
- As so few school districts currently have programs to identify gifted students, they would simply notify NHDOE of their non-existent programs.
- NH is ranked around 50th in the country for acknowledging talented and gifted students.
- Even Mississippi, who ranks 50th for overall education in the country, does more than NH in terms of acknowledging gifted and talented students.
- This is a long-neglected situation.
- As an advocate of public education, he sees this as increasing support for public education.
- Senator Prentiss asked Representative Moffett about the requirement for an annual report to NHDOE.
 - Representative Moffett said the bill simply asks that districts share what they do with NHDOE. Sharing this information could be done via email or an attachment.
 - In many cases, school districts don't do anything so they would just say that.

Representative Deborah Hobson – Rockingham, District 35

- Supports this bill.
- This bill is a starting point as we should be keeping track of students who excel to replicate best practices.
- We might see a decrease in behavioral issues in students by keeping a closer eye on this population.

Representative Erica Layon – Rockingham, District 6

- Supports this bill.
- Opportunities or programs for gifted students are very limited in NH and there is essentially no data on what we do offer.
- A school that recognizes underchallenged, bright students can show up as disruptive, discipline problems might implement policy where students are encouraged to take on an extra challenge, assuming their work quality stays the same or improves.
- For instance, a school might allow a policy where students could choose books from a more advanced section of the library or check out more books if they demonstrate a thirst for reading.
- Options are limitless.
- Knowing what we are doing with gifted students is very important.

- Some states are doing away with accelerated math and she does not want to see that happen in NH.
- Giftedness is not a matter of social or socioeconomic status.
- 6-10% of students are gifted no matter their background. Thus, 10,000-17,000 NH students are gifted.
- Gifted offerings are limited to some exceptional educators who go above and beyond.
- She runs a gifted Facebook page which is full of families who felt they had no choice but to leave the public school system.
- Low income and minority gifted students are the least likely to be appropriately challenged and they face barriers.
- Senator Kahn asked Representative Layon if she would believe that NHDOE does not have a staff member to cover this area.
 - Representative Layon said yes, she is aware and it is shocking.
 - There is also no information.
 - Once information becomes available, perhaps NHDOE could budget a part-time or full-time role.
 - They would be starting from scratch without a bill like this which would collect data.

Ann Marie Banfield

- Supports this bill.
- There is a new focus on educational equity. However, there is a difference between equity and equality as it relates to education reform.
- Looking for ways to elevate students who have been marginalized in the past, in an effort to make sure those opportunities are available, provides equality of opportunities.
- Compare this to eliminated gifted programs so that students are performing at the same level. This would deny marginalized students with opportunities but now there is equity in outcomes.
- The Massachusetts Miracle was a good step towards equality for all students, the marginalized included.
- MADOE focused on improving academic content and targeting marginalized students in order to improve their opportunities.
- Under the current model, where competency education is introduced, the focus is on closing the achievement gap.
- We see this played out by pulling the top down for all to be on the same level.
- We achieve equity by taking away opportunities for gifted children.
- The Massachusetts Miracle was nationally acknowledged for drafting the best academic standards in the country.
- There have been identified flaws with common core and states have moved away from this model.

- She plans to submit written testimony.
- Senator Prentiss asked about the annual reporting requirement as she understood Representative Moffett say this is simply a shared folder as a resource. She asked if we need a law for this.
 - Ms. Banfield said it sounds like Senator Prentiss is looking for more technical information that Representative Moffett may be able to provide.
 - Representative Moffett said this bill enforces an information requirement, not a policy requirement.
 - Schools already have to submit various, routine information requirements, for example, school populations, budgets, etc. This is not a policy requirement.

amh

Date Hearing Report completed: April 30, 2021