WEST virginia legislature

2021 regular session

Introduced

Senate Bill 348

By Senators Rucker and Roberts

[Introduced February 18, 2021; referred  
to the Committee on Education]

A BILL to amend and reenact 18-8-1a of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to requirements for compulsory school attendance; providing that parent and guardian make determination to remove child from kindergarten program; allowing enforcement of compulsory school attendance against anyone required to attend school; allowing students who attend certain Montessori programs enroll in first grade without further placement testing; and requiring out-of-state students be placed in the grade from which they transferred.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 8. COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.

§18-8-1a. Commencement and termination of compulsory school attendance; public school entrance requirements; exceptions.

(a) Notwithstanding the provisions of §18-8-1 of this code, compulsory school attendance begins with the school year in which the sixth birthday is reached prior to September 1 of such year or upon enrolling in a publicly supported kindergarten program and, subject to subdivision (3) of this subsection, continues to the 16th birthday or for as long as the student continues to be enrolled in a school system after the 16th birthday.

(1) A child may be removed from such kindergarten program when the ~~principal, teacher and~~ parent or guardian ~~concur~~ determine that the best interest of the child would not be served by requiring further attendance. *~~Provided,~~* ~~That the principal shall make the final determination with regard to compulsory school attendance in a publicly supported kindergarten program.~~

(2) The compulsory school attendance provision of this article shall be enforced against a person 18 years of age or older for as long as the person continues to be who is enrolled in a school system and may not be enforced against the parent, guardian or custodian of the person.

(3) Notwithstanding the provisions of §18-1-1 *et seq.* of this code, compulsory school attendance begins with the school year in which the sixth birthday is reached prior to September 1 of such year or upon enrolling in a publicly supported kindergarten program and continues to the 17th birthday or for as long as the student continues to be enrolled in a school system after the 17th birthday: *Provided,* That beginning in the school year 2019-2020, compulsory school attendance begins with the school year in which the sixth birthday is reached prior to July 1 of such year or upon enrolling in a full-time publicly funded ~~supported~~ kindergarten program.

(b) Attendance at a state-approved or Montessori kindergarten, as provided in §18-5-18, is deemed school attendance for purposes of this section. ~~Prior to entrance~~ A child shall be placed into the first grade in accordance with §18-2-5 of this code, without further placement testing if the ~~each~~ child ~~must have either~~ :

(1) Successfully completed such publicly or privately supported, state-approved kindergarten program, ~~or~~ Montessori kindergarten program, homeschool program, or HOPE Scholarship program; or

(2) Successfully completed an entrance test of basic readiness skills approved by the county in which the school is located. The test may be administered in lieu of kindergarten attendance only under extraordinary circumstances to be determined by the county board.

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, ~~section five, article two of this chapter~~ §18-2-5, and ~~section eighteen, article five of this chapter~~ §18-5-18 of this code, a county board may provide for advanced entrance or placement under policies adopted by said board for any child who has demonstrated sufficient mental and physical competency for such entrance or placement.

(d) ~~This section does not prevent a~~ A student from another state, or who is eligible to enroll in a public school in this state, ~~from enrolling in the~~ shall be enrolled in the same grade in a public school in West Virginia as the student was enrolled at the school from which the student transferred. A transcript or other credential provided pursuant to §18-8-12 of this code shall be accepted by a public school in this state as a record of a student’s previous academic performance for the purposes of placement and credit assignment.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to provide for compulsory school attendance; to provide that parent and guardian make the determination to remove child from kindergarten program; allow enforcement of compulsory school attendance against anyone required to attend school; allow students who attend certain Montessori programs enroll in first grade without further placement testing; and require out of state students be placed in the grade from which they transferred.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.