

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6365

As of January 23, 2002

Title: An act relating to lowering the age for mandatory school attendance.

Brief Description: Lowering the age for mandatory school attendance from eight to six.

Sponsors: Senators Winsley, McAuliffe, Finkbeiner, Prentice, Fairley, Eide, Rasmussen, Shin, Kohl-Welles, Keiser, Kline, Carlson and Hale.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 1/31/02.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Current state law requires school districts to offer an education program for children who are between the ages of five and 21. However, parents are not required to send their child to school until the child is eight years old. If a parent enrolls a six or a seven-year-old child in a public school, then the child is subject to the statutory truancy provisions and the school must take certain actions if the child has an unexcused absence from school.

The age when children are required to start school varies in other states. According to the Education Commission of the States, Washington is one of two states with the mandatory school attendance age of eight. Pennsylvania is the other. Twenty states have the mandatory school attendance age of six.

Summary of Bill: The age when children are required to attend school is lowered from eight to six. The truancy provision specifically addressing six and seven-year-old children is repealed. However, six and seven-year-old children are still subject to the truancy provisions provided in a different statute.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 22, 2002.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.