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**Education Committee**

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**HB 1708**

**Brief Description:** Regarding dropout prevention.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Lovick, Quall, Dickerson, Cox, Haigh, Kenney, McDermott, O'Brien, Sells, B. Sullivan, Appleton, Simpson, Kagi, Darneille, Morrell, Green, P. Sullivan, Ormsby, McCoy, Chase and Moeller.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to review, evaluate, and report to the Legislature regarding dropout prevention programs.
- Requires the SPI to establish dropout reduction and high school graduation rate goals for students in grades seven through twelve.
- Removes the authority granted to the Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission (A+ Commission) to adopt dropout reduction goals.
- Expands the grade range for which school districts must report dropout data by including grades seven and eight with grades nine through twelve.

**Hearing Date:** 2/14/05

**Staff:** Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

**Background:**

Dropout Definitions

Dropouts typically are defined as students who leave school before graduating from high school with a diploma, but there is no universally accepted definition for the term *dropout*. For purposes of state statistics, dropouts are defined as students who leave high school without a regular diploma and do not transfer to another school. Under this definition, students who continue beyond their senior year in order to complete graduation requirements are not necessarily dropouts. Likewise, students who participate in GED preparation courses also are not dropouts if they re-enter school to complete graduation requirements before turning 21 years of age.

Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, (NCLB) on-time graduation rates are an additional indicator of adequate yearly progress (AYP). Graduation rates under the NCLB, however, may reflect only the "percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a regular

diploma in the standard number of years." Under this definition, continuing students who earn a diploma before turning age 21 still are counted as dropouts.

#### Washington's Graduation Rate Goals

The A+ Commission is authorized, but not required, to adopt dropout reduction goals for students in grades seven through twelve. Goals must be established by rule, and require legislative review prior to adoption.

The current graduation rate goals adopted by the Commission were established in 2003 and apply only to schools serving 30 or more high school students. For each of the years 2004 through 2013, the graduation rate goal is the lesser of: (a) the statewide average graduation rate for the class of 2002 (approximately 66 percent); or (b) the school's own 2003 graduation rate plus one percentage point annually. In 2014, the graduation rate goal for all schools is 85 percent, and this goal applies to all subgroups defined in the NCLB.

At its December 2004 meeting, the Commission considered the establishment of dropout reduction goals for grades seven and eight, but elected to postpone action on this issue until it can be determined whether the data reporting capabilities for seventh and eighth students are sufficiently in place. At its February 2005 meeting the Commission established proposed revisions to high school graduation rate goals, and recently requested to schedule legislative review of those proposed revisions.

#### School District Reporting and Graduation and Dropout Statistics

School districts are required to report annually to the SPI regarding the number of high school students who dropout in each of the grades nine through twelve, including the dropout rates of students according to ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability status. Districts also report regarding the causes and reasons attributed to dropping out as reported by students.

In the 2002-03 school year, an estimated 7 percent of all high school students dropped out of school. Of the 2003 graduating class cohort, those students who entered grade nine in 1999 approximately 24 percent dropped out before graduating, and another 10 percent were still enrolled at the end of twelfth grade. The on-time graduation rate for Washington high school students in 2003 was approximately 66 percent.

#### Dropout Prevention Programs

The strategies for dropout prevention can be organized into two general categories: comprehensive school improvement and reform programs, and targeted programs focused at reaching students who are at risk of dropping out.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

The SPI is directed to review and evaluate promising dropout prevention programs, including programs using non-punitive approaches to school discipline, and to report by December 2005, to the Legislature. The SPI will recommend the two most promising comprehensive dropout prevention programs, and the two most promising targeted dropout prevention programs.

The SPI also is directed to establish dropout reduction and high school graduation rate goals for schools and districts. The goals must require annual uniform incremental improvements starting in 2005-06 and must meet or exceed the 2014 high school graduation rate goal of 85 percent. The

setting of goals for dropout reduction and high school graduation rates is no longer under the authority of the A+ Commission.

School districts are required to include grades seven and eight in their annual report.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.