

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5441

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Requiring studies of the state's education systems.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Weinstein, McAuliffe, Prentice, Kohl-Welles, Eide, Berkey, Poulsen, Keiser, Brown, Fraser, Shin, Haugen, Schmidt, Kline, Rockefeller, Spanel and Rasmussen; by request of Governor Gregoire).

Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

House Committee on Appropriations

Background: Numerous studies, mostly at the national level, have explored the cost benefits of providing high-quality early learning opportunities for young children.

There have been numerous studies, particularly since the 1970's, on various aspects of the K-12 funding system, including issues pertaining to the finance structure of K-12 education, teacher compensation, remedial instruction, special education, transportation, and student enrollment. Most recently, the House of Representatives organized, during the 2004 interim, a House K-12 Finance Workgroup that studied the finance structure for the state's public schools.

There have been numerous studies exploring the various funding aspects of higher education in the state, including studies on access issues, dual enrollment, and high-demand enrollment. The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is required under state law to report to the Legislature standardized data on education-related expenditures by the state's universities and colleges that includes the costs of instruction, costs to provide degrees in specific fields, costs for pre-college remedial instruction, and state support for students. The HECB is required to conduct this higher education cost study every four academic years.

Summary: The comprehensive education study steering committee is created. Members of the steering committee include: the Governor, who will chair the steering committee; the Director of the Office of Financial Management; two members from the House of Representatives with one appointed by each major caucus; two members from the Senate with one appointed by each major caucus; four citizens appointed by the Governor; and the chairs of each of the three advisory committees, one each on early learning, K-12 education, and higher education. The chair of the advisory committee on K-12 will be the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The chair of the advisory committee on early learning will be appointed by the Governor from a list of names submitted by groups representing early learning. The chair of the advisory committee on higher education will be selected by the Governor from a list of three or more names submitted by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Council of Presidents. The steering committee

will appoint the members of the advisory committee on early learning, the advisory committee on K-12, and the advisory committee on higher education.

The steering committee will: direct and coordinate the studies, giving consideration to recently completed, related finance studies; develop recommendations based on the work of the studies; and develop recommendations about how the state can best provide stable funding for student learning for young children, students in the public schools, and students in the public colleges and universities. The steering committee may enter into contracts as needed to support the work of the study.

A comprehensive study of early learning must include: defining the populations being served, those that could be served, and program access; determining the state's role in supporting quality early learning opportunities; determining the state's role in training persons providing services; and providing for smooth student transitions to K-12 programs.

The comprehensive K-12 study must address: the constitutional and legal requirements of the current finance system and the impact of the goals of the current education reform on the system; the strengths and weaknesses of the current finance formulas and how those formulas affect school district operations and performance; potential changes to the current finance system; a review of the funding systems in at least five other states; local and regional funding challenges by individual school districts; the effectiveness of English language learner instruction; and specific issues facing schools in the areas of accountability, governance, student and educator support; district spending practices; potential changes to the current salary system in terms of aligned to professional development and student performance; and reporting on remediation in mathematics, science, and language arts.

A comprehensive study of higher education must include: options for creating a new funding system; the number and distribution of enrollments at two and four-year institutions of higher education needed to meet demographic and work force training needs; methods for determining the cost of instruction in various program areas, the appropriate share of the cost of instruction that should be funded through tuition, general fund-state subsidies, and financial aid; providing for smooth transitions from high school to college, including dual credit options and adequate preparation for college-level coursework; identifying strategies and costs for increasing access to baccalaureate degrees; identifying incentives to optimize research by public colleges and universities that have the potential of affecting economic and social conditions for state citizens; options for using existing capacity in independent colleges and universities; a review of higher education governance as it relates to fiscal policy for higher education; methods for developing common articulation of lower-division coursework among institutions of higher education; and options for coordinating capital and operating appropriations.

The steering committee is required to provide interim reports to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature by November 15, 2005, and June 16, 2006. The final report and recommendations of the steering committee must be submitted by November 15, 2006.

This bill will expire July 1, 2007.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate 31 18
House 76 20 (House amended)
Senate 32 14 (Senate concurred)

Effective: July 24, 2005