

SB 5441-S2.E - DIGEST

(DIGEST AS ENACTED)

Finds that: (1) The early years mark the most extraordinary period of growth for young children. The state's role in providing access to early learning opportunities has never been consistently defined;

(2) More than a quarter of a century has passed since the current school finance system was first created, and the challenges facing our schools and students have grown and changed dramatically during that time. Policies have been established creating new expectations and goals for students under education reform;

(3) Demographic pressures and work force needs will continue to increase demand for access to postsecondary education and training. Public two-year and four-year institutions of higher education are also important avenues for programs such as adult basic education and English as a second language that are the foundation for employment and further education for an increasing number of people. Washington ranks thirty-third in the nation in the number of bachelor's degrees earned per one thousand residents ages twenty through twenty-nine years, and will graduate the largest high school class in its history in 2008. Washington citizens deserve access to baccalaureate degree opportunities. Washington's public universities and colleges engage in research that contributes to the economic and social well-being of the state. Students have paid an increasing cost of their education with tuition growing faster than personal income or inflation; and

(4) Through a comprehensive study, the legislature will have solid information to determine how best to use its resources to create a strong education system that will provide an educated citizenry and a thriving economy in this state.

Requires the steering committee to provide interim reports to the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the senate and the house of representatives by November 15, 2005, and June 16, 2006. These interim reports shall document ongoing work to-date, initial findings, and next steps. The November 15, 2005, interim report may recommend possible action items for consideration in the 2006 legislative session.

Requires the final report and recommendations of the steering committee to be submitted to the legislature by November 15, 2006.