

SB 5938 - DIGEST

Recognizes that research from the office of the superintendent of public instruction concludes that low-income and minority students encounter fewer opportunities to learn, inadequate instruction and support, and lower expectations from their schools and teachers, and that schools are not sufficiently inclusive of all cultures represented in the state's public schools.

Finds that the academic achievement gap is the result of many factors, including poverty, educational opportunity of parents, recent immigration, family mobility, societal and institutional bias, and the fact that English is not the primary language in many homes.

Finds that in order to close the achievement gap, the educational system will need to change how it approaches learning and teaching through a greater understanding of the impact of language, culture, race, and poverty on student achievement.

Declares that closing the achievement gap will require a comprehensive and coordinated approach designed to: (1) Create more learning environments that are intolerant of racism and exclusion and in which high expectations are held for all students;

(2) Develop curricula and teaching practices that recognize the differences in ethnicity, language, and culture; and

(3) Require that teacher training and professional development programs include opportunities to learn cultural responsiveness skills and effective instructional strategies that are successful in raising the academic achievement of traditionally underachieving students.

Creates the joint select committee on equitable opportunity for all.

Requires the joint select committee to report its findings and recommendations, including a reasonable timeline for implementation that is prioritized based on existing efforts already under way and the resources necessary to fully implement the action item, by September 1, 2006, to the senate committee on early learning, K-12 and higher education and the house of representatives committee on education. The report shall include a determination of the actions and resources necessary to complete the action steps in this act, including whether existing basic education moneys can be used and the amount of additional funding needed.