

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2722

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to addressing the achievement gap for African- American students.

Brief Description: Creating an advisory committee to address the achievement gap for African-American students.

Sponsors: Representatives Pettigrew, Kenney, Morris, Sullivan, Hasegawa, Upthegrove, Loomis, Pedersen, Darneille, Conway, Hudgins, Quall, Ericks, Kagi and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/1/08, 2/4/08 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning to convene an advisory committee to create a comprehensive strategic plan for addressing the achievement gap for African-American students.
- Requires a final report by December 2008.
- Requires an annual report beginning in 2010 on the implementation of strategies and the improvement in educational performance measures established by the plan.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Barlow, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haigh, Lias, Roach, Santos and Sullivan.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Results for the 2007 high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) show that 80.8 percent of 10th grade students met standard in reading, 83.9 percent met standard in writing, and 50.4 percent met standard in mathematics. However, there are disproportionate levels of achievement among groups of students. The gap in WASL scores between non-Asian minority students and white students in reading is approximately 20 percentage points. The gap in mathematics is between 20 and 30 percentage points. African-American high school students are lagging behind other student groups in both reading and mathematics WASL scores. Approximately 25 percent of African-American students drop out of school between 9th and 12th grade, compared to 17 percent of white students.

In 2006 the Black Education Strategy Roundtable (Roundtable), an informal advisory group convened by the Washington Commission on African American Affairs, convened community forums and developed a set of recommendations for education policy makers which included:

- (1) a statewide strategic plan to close the racial opportunity and achievement gap;
- (2) a public-private partnership to fund and operate local family engagement and empowerment activities and capacity building institutes for families;
- (3) a public-private partnership for additional community-based supplemental education for Black youth; and
- (4) a funding and policy package to increase school funding and fundamentally redesign the school day, curriculum, and instructional practices to meet the needs and learning styles of students not meeting state standards.

The mission of the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) is to serve as a clearinghouse for information, promising practices, and research that promotes and supports effective learning environments for all students, especially those in underserved communities. Another aspect of the CISL's mandate is to promote and facilitate family, school, and community partnerships around the state. The CISL is housed within the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The CISL must convene an advisory committee to craft a strategic plan to address the achievement gap for African-American students. The advisory committee is comprised of 15 members, including educators, parents, and representatives of community-based organizations, the Washington Commission on African-American Affairs, and the Office of the Education Ombudsman. Five members each are appointed by the Speaker of the House and the Secretary of the Senate, and the remaining members are appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI).

The duties of the advisory committee are to conduct a detailed analysis of the achievement gap for African-American students; examine the extent that current initiatives address the needs of African-American students; identify best practices and promising programs; develop a comprehensive plan with specific strategies, interventions, and funding to improve

educational outcomes for African-American students; and develop performance improvement measures and benchmarks to monitor progress.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy must assist the advisory committee in examining detailed data on achievement indicators and trends.

A final report is due December 1, 2008, to the SPI, the Governor, the State Board of Education, the P-20 Council, and the education committees of the Legislature.

Beginning in January 2010, the CISL reports annually on the implementation of strategies to address the achievement gap for African-American students and on the progress of improvement of education performance measures for African-American students.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Rather than only recommending strategies, the advisory committee develops a comprehensive plan with specific strategies, interventions, and funding to improve outcomes for African-American students. The final report is due December 30, 2008, rather than 2009. Annual progress reports begin in 2010 rather than 2011. The advisory committee and the CISL also submit their reports to the State Board of Education and the P-20 Council.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) It is exciting to be able to involve the community in reviewing and participating in the solutions to address the achievement gap. There are a range of programs and interventions available, but there is a need to look carefully to make sure they are working for African-American students. This is a great opportunity to explore the real issues in educating the African-American child. Too little has changed in society and in schools over the last 50 years. On the first day of Black History Month, it is fitting to consider a bold action on behalf of African-American students. African-American students must leave the education system well prepared to contribute to the health of the state and have a quality life for themselves. Excellent education for African-American students will lift education for all students, and ultimately lift the state.

African-Americans continue to be under-represented in labor agreements and unions. A major problem is lack of preparation, including a lack of math and basic reading skills. To be more diverse and to create a new generation of leaders, we need to invest in African-American youth. The WASL results are an embarrassment to the African-American community. To build a better America, we must build better communities. It is appropriate to reach out to the African-American community to address the achievement gap. This country

was founded on the promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But it was also founded on a deal that slavery was a permitted aspect of life. The deal was revoked, but the consequences have never been fully addressed. The reduction of disproportionality will not occur without focusing on disaggregated groups of students in specific and appropriate ways. The societal impact of this lack of achievement is almost beyond measure. The data is alarming no matter what indices are used. The state must recognize the unique needs of this student group. Past years of neglect must be addressed.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Pettigrew, prime sponsor; Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Andrew Griffin, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Thelma Jackson, Washington Alliance of Black School Educators; Mona Bailey, Black Education Strategy Roundtable; James Kelly, Seattle Urban League; Lee Newgent, Seattle Building Trades; Jim Street, Reinvesting in Youth; and Grover Johnson, A. Philip Rudolph Institute.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.