
Education Committee

SSB 6629

Brief Description: Convening a working group to make recommendations defining a basic education program for highly capable students.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Oemig and McAuliffe).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Tasks the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction with convening a working group to make recommendations regarding a highly capable program.
- Requires that recommendations be made to the Quality Education Council and the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2010.

Hearing Date:

Staff: Cece Clynch (786-7195).

Background:

Highly Capable Students.

In 2009 the Legislature enacted Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2261 (ESHB 2261) which, among other things, included a finding that for highly capable students, access to accelerated learning and enhanced instruction is access to a basic education. Recognizing that there are multiple definitions of highly capable, and that research literature supports using multiple criteria to identify highly capable students, no single method of identification was prescribed. An intent was expressed to allocate funding based on 2.314 percent of each school district's population and authorize districts to identify, through multiple, objective criteria, those students eligible to receive accelerated learning and enhanced instruction through the highly capable program in the district. This 2009 legislation expressly provided that access to a highly capable program is not an individual entitlement for any particular student.

The effective date of the sections regarding highly capable students is September 1, 2011.

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.

While the ESHB 2261 also established a safety net to provide districts additional funding for the highly capable program if the percentage of students in the district program was larger than the percentage funded by the state, the Governor vetoed that section. The veto message noted that there was much work left to be done to establish standards, guidelines, and definitions for what constitutes a highly capable program and what the funding level should be for such a program.

Quality Education Council.

The Quality Education Council (QEC) was created to oversee the implementation and financing of ESHB 2261. The QEC is composed of eight legislators, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and one representative from the Governor's Office, State Board of Education, Professional Educator Standards Board, and Department of Early Learning.

Summary of Bill:

The OSPI must convene a technical working group to make recommendations regarding a highly capable program. The working group is to be composed of representatives with significant expertise in the education of highly capable and gifted students. This group may convene advisory subgroups on specific topics as necessary to assure participation and input from a broad array of diverse stakeholders.

The working group must consult with, and seek input from:

- nationally recognized experts;
- researchers and academics on the unique educational, emotional, and social needs of highly capable students and how to identify such students;
- representatives of national organizations and associations for educators of or advocates for highly capable students;
- school district representatives who are educators, counselors, and classified school employees involved with highly capable programs;
- parents of students who have been identified as highly capable;
- representatives from the federally recognized tribes;
- representatives of cultural, linguistic, and racial minority groups; and
- representatives of the community of persons with disabilities.

Recommendations from the working group are due to the QEC and appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2010. These recommendations must minimize over-representation and under-representation of any particular demographic or socioeconomic group relative to the presence of this group in the overall student population. The recommendations must also include:

- standardized state-level identification procedures, standards, criteria, and benchmarks, including a definition or definitions of a highly capable student. Students who are both highly capable and are students of color, poor, or have a disability must be addressed;
- appropriate programs and services that have been shown by research and practice to be effective with highly capable students, but maintain options and flexibility for school districts, where possible;
- program administration, management, and reporting requirements for school districts;

- appropriate educator qualifications, certification requirements, and professional development and support for educators and other staff who are involved in programs for highly capable students;
- self-evaluation models to be used by school districts to determine the effectiveness of the program and services provided by the school district for highly capable programs;
- an appropriate state-level funding structure; and
- other topics deemed to be relevant by the working group.

Recommendations from the working group must take into consideration that access to the program for highly capable students is not an individual entitlement for any particular student.

An expiration date of August 1, 2011 is specified.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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