

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1669

As Passed House:
January 23, 2012

Title: An act relating to the educational opportunity gap, including implementing recommendations made by the achievement gap oversight and accountability committee.

Brief Description: Regarding the educational opportunity gap.

Sponsors: Representatives Santos, Parker, Dammeier, McCoy, Kenney, Hasegawa, Moscoso and Maxwell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/11/11, 2/15/11 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/26/11, 71-26.

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 1/23/12, 71-24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- References to the "achievement gap" throughout the school code and in the chapter regarding the Department of Early Learning are changed to "educational opportunity gap."
- Changes the name of the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee to the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Lytton, Vice Chair; Dammeier, Ranking Minority Member; Dahlquist, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Angel, Billig, Fagan, Finn, Haigh, Hunt, Kretz, Ladenburg, Lias, Maxwell, McCoy, Probst and Wilcox.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove and Klippert.

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.

Staff: Cece Clynch (786-7195).

Background:

The 2008 Legislature commissioned five studies to analyze the differences in academic achievement and educational outcomes among various subgroups of students. These differences were referred to as the achievement gap. The commissioned studies drew from research, best practices, and personal, professional, and cultural experiences to come up with various recommendations to close the achievement gap.

In 2009 the Legislature created the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (Committee) to synthesize findings and recommendations from the 2008 studies into an implementation plan, and recommend policies and strategies to close the achievement gap. The Committee is comprised of six legislators, a representative of federally recognized tribes in Washington to be designated by the tribes, and four members appointed by the Governor in consultation with the state ethnic commissions and representing the African American community, the Latino community, the Asian American community, and the Pacific Islander community. The Governor and the tribes were encouraged to designate members with school experience. Staff support for the Committee is provided by the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning.

According to the January 2010 report by the Committee:

"The "achievement gap" classically refers to the difference in test scores between racial and ethnic students and their white counterparts. This terminology is deeply embedded in the nation's vocabulary, including our own enabling legislation and our committee's name — Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee. However, our work makes us increasingly wary of the term the "achievement gap" for two reasons. First, the plural form "achievement gaps" more correctly denotes the unique and complex challenges faced by our various ethnic and racial subgroups.

Second, and more importantly, we are increasingly convinced that the gap arises from inequities in the education system. All students can succeed, but they need highly effective teachers, exemplary curriculum and materials, and appropriate academic and social support — resources that are often missing today for students of color. These "opportunity gaps" or "access gaps" make student success difficult or impossible. Part of the work of the Committee is to remedy this situation and develop a statewide plan to provide equitable opportunities for ALL students."

Summary of Bill:

References to the "achievement gap" throughout the school code and in the chapter regarding the Department of Early Learning are changed to "educational opportunity gap."

The name of the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee is changed to the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This change in language will take the onus off the students and put it where it belongs and that is to make sure that all students have the opportunity to succeed. Although the term achievement gap is used, there is no hiding the fact that this is really an opportunity gap. There are opportunity gaps in funding and in programs. The opportunities are distributed unevenly in K-12 and this continues in the higher education realm. For instance, there are 22,000 students who qualify for the State Need Grant who are not being served due to lack of funds. Students of color are tired of hearing about the achievement gap. They recognize that there is an opportunity gap and want to be given opportunities. There can be hidden gaps, such as the one that is revealed when data reported for Asians is disaggregated. One boy was sent to juvenile detention but when he was released, a teacher gave him an opportunity and that made all the difference. All students need to be provided with opportunities. The term achievement gap can perpetuate the idea that somehow these students are not as capable. This is not so. They just need to be provided with the same opportunities. The achievement gap is due to the opportunity gap. The richness the various communities bring must be affirmed.

(In support with concerns) A better description would be the instructional gap. Not enough instruction is being provided to the students most in need of it. The K-12 funding in this state is not equitable. Impending cuts are going to make things work. Cuts do not have an equitable effect because low-income students cannot make it up. There is no need for further studies. Equitable funding should be based on need and not numbers.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Santos, prime sponsor; George Scarola, League of Education Voters; Frieda Takamura and Sili Savusa, Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee; and Ben Kodama, Asian Pacific Islander Think Tank and Equitable Opportunity Caucus.

(In support with concerns) Dave Larson, Tukwila School Board.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.