

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 1669

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As of March 10, 2011

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

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/10/11.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Staff:** Juliana Roe (786-7438)

**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

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Accountability Committee. However, our work makes us increasingly wary of the term 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.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This bill incorporates the recommendations of the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee which has worked very hard in concert with other legislatively created entities, such as the Quality Education Council and the state Board of Education. The bill makes no substantive policy changes, only technical reference changes.

The achievement gap is a term of art that sounds nice but isn't quite right. Opportunity gap is more descriptive of what is actually happening. The gap starts early, is persistent and stubborn. The gap starts in early learning and goes through higher education. For example, there are 11,000 children eligible for early learning in this state, but it is not provided. All-day kindergarten is provided in only one of every five schools. The gap is profound and matches zip codes and race. Further, there is a low percentage of teachers of color so that students do not see themselves in the classroom. Rising tuition costs are also a problem.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Santos, prime sponsor; George Scarola, League of Education Voters.