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## Education Committee

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### HB 1947

**Brief Description:** Establishing a comprehensive plan to expand learning opportunities and improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities or special needs using multiple strategies and statewide partnerships.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Pollet, Walsh, Santos, S. Hunt, Orwall, Ortiz-Self, Tarleton, Kagi, Bergquist, Robinson, Gregerson and Ryu.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Commission on Improving Outcomes for Students with Special Needs to develop a ten-year strategic plan to expand learning opportunities and improve educational outcomes for all students with disabilities or special needs and an accountability framework to monitor and report annually on the progress being made toward the ten-year goal.
- Requires the Office of Financial Management to contract with experts in promoting and supporting education for students with disabilities, to the extent funds are appropriated for these purposes, for the purpose of expanding learning opportunities and improving educational outcomes that are aligned with the accountability framework.
- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to increase interdisciplinary instruction and project based learning that will assist students with disabilities or special needs.
- Clarifies the role of the Quality Education Council with regard to students with disabilities or special needs.
- Includes an emergency effective clause to make the bill effective 30 days after signed into law.

**Hearing Date:** 2/16/15

**Staff:** Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

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*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.*

## **Background:**

### Office of the Education Ombuds Report on the Creation of a Statewide Special Education Task Force.

The Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) was established in 2006 to serve as an independent resource for parents and families regarding their involvement with public schools. In November 2014, as directed by a proviso in the supplemental operating budget, the OEO submitted to the Legislature a scope of work and proposed plan for a task force on success for students with special needs. In developing the plan, as directed by the proviso, the OEO sought input from a broad group of stakeholders, including interested parents, educators, state agencies, and organizations representing students placed or qualified to be placed in special education and students with a section 504 plan. The OEO's report recommended the creation of a "Blue Ribbon" Commission that should:

- have autonomy and research capacity, including the ability to recommend technical and innovative changes across systems to promote better educational outcomes for all students;
- outline recommendations to ensure the various systems that serve children and youth, including education, health, mental health, social services, and juvenile justice can collaborate effectively, eliminate gaps, and avoid duplication of efforts;
- provide recommendations that will ensure continuity, access and success for students starting with early learning, and continuing from preschool to high school and post-secondary education, through career training and employment;
- have two cochairs who demonstrate leadership in education and child advocacy, who promote collaborative relationships, and will guide 12 expert panelists through a process of results-focused regional conversations to build trust in educators and parents so that extraordinary results can be produced with common goals and a shared mission;
- convene statewide workgroups with dense and diverse geographic, agency, consumer and community representation that can foster collective efforts toward the continuous improvement of the education system to meet the needs of all learners and do a deep dive on how education services are delivered to students with disabilities;
- be funded on a biennium basis and charged with developing a ten-year action plan, including an initial report with recommendations for systemic changes after the first two and four years; and
- be funded for a full-time executive director with administrative support.

### Quality Education Council.

In 2009 the Legislature created the Quality Education Council (QEC) and tasked it with informing and making strategic recommendations on the ongoing implementation of the program of Basic Education and the funding to support it. The QEC members are eight legislators; representatives of the state education agencies; and a representative from the Department of Early Learning, the Office of the Governor, and the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee. The QEC has submitted annual reports to the Legislature, including various recommendations intended to close the educational opportunity gap; improve supplemental instruction through the Learning Assistance Program, the Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program (TBIP), and the Highly Capable Program; and support education professionals, including through programs that encourage diverse populations to become teachers. The QEC has also examined issues related to early learning and the state funding formula for the TBIP in response to specific legislative assignments.

## Summary of Bill:

### Commission on Improving Outcomes for Students with Special Needs.

The Commission on Improving Outcomes for Students with Special Needs (Commission) is established to develop a ten-year strategic plan to expand learning opportunities and improve educational outcomes for all students with disabilities or special needs and an accountability framework to monitor and report annually on the progress being made toward the ten-year goal. Definitions are included for the following terms: institutions of higher education; mental health disorder; school organizations; state education agencies; students with disabilities; and students with special needs.

*Framework.* The single, cohesive, and comprehensive accountability framework must establish a limited number of select and specific goals that are meaningful indicators of progress toward eliminating the most significant barriers to success, and disparities in outcomes, for students with disabilities or special needs within ten years. The framework must use measures that are quantifiable and based on data that are regularly and reliably collected statewide, examples are provided.

*Roadmap.* The Commission must propose goals and priorities to eliminate the most significant barriers to success for students with disabilities or special needs in a ten-year roadmap. The roadmap must address the needs of students with disabilities or special needs to reach higher levels of educational attainment and be aligned with Washington's workforce needs for certificates and degrees in particular fields of study. The first roadmap must be submitted to the Governor, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and the Legislature by December 1, 2016 and must include certain recommendations and analysis. The roadmap must be updated every two years.

*Report Card.* The Commission, in collaboration with the OSPI and the Education Research and Data Center, must produce an annual report card on the state's progress toward expanding learning opportunities and improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities or special needs. The first annual report card must be posted by January 10, 2016.

*Commission Membership.* The Governor must appoint two cochairs to the Commission: one who demonstrates respected leadership in education and child advocacy, and is known to foster collaboration and partnerships; and one who equally represents a diverse range of child and parent consumer experiences with demonstrated leadership in building relationships and facilitating accord with educators, legislators, and policymakers. The cochairs must hire an executive director responsible for convening and staffing the task force and subcommittees, providing research requested by the commission, administration, and preparation of reports. Staff support must be provided by the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management (OFM), with support from the state education agencies and institutions of higher education, as necessary.

The Governor's Office must create an application process for individuals interested in participating as members on the Commission. The cochairs must select a pool of nominees from the applicants who are geographically and demographically diverse and represent a wide variety of stakeholder groups. The Governor must appoint 12 members to the Commission from the list of nominees, including educators, parents, certain experts, and association representatives.

Certain department heads or their designees are ex officio nonvoting members of the commission.

*Commission Powers.* The Commission has the power to:

- convene regional and statewide work groups that bring persons with relevant expertise to the work of the Commission and create a level of consensus-building and trust needed for a meaningful shift in the way services are delivered to students with disabilities or special needs;
- conduct research and system reviews, and consult experts to inform its work; and
- seek grants and federal funding to carry out research or other activities authorized by the chapter.

#### Special Education Innovation Project.

To the extent funds are specifically appropriated, the OFM must contract with a statewide organization with expertise in promoting and supporting education from early learning through postsecondary education for students with disabilities or special needs. The purpose of the contract is to identify, test, and develop scalable, cost-effective, and evidence-based approaches for expanding learning opportunities and improving educational outcomes that are aligned with the Commission's accountability framework. Specific tasks are provided, including: conducting a statewide communications campaign; expanding regional networks; establishing an innovation fund offering competitive innovation grants; expanding professional development opportunities; and others.

#### Interdisciplinary Instruction and Project-based Learning in Schools.

To the extent funds are specifically appropriated, the OSPI, in consultation with the Commission, must identify and disseminate resources and materials to schools to encourage and increase interdisciplinary instruction and project-based learning that will assist a student with disabilities or special needs to meet the requirements of a high school diploma. The OSPI must create partnerships for collaboration using work groups of educators and education service districts, charter schools, institutions of higher education, and innovation grant recipients. These work groups must:

- identify interdisciplinary instructional modules and project-based learning models, projects, lessons, and guides appropriate for students with disabilities or special needs at different grade levels; and
- make the collected information available for teachers to incorporate into their classroom instruction.

The OSPI must disseminate information and research on best practices in interdisciplinary instruction and project-based learning that improves successful outcomes for students with disabilities or special needs. The OSPI must also collaborate with education service districts to make available professional development opportunities in brain research and assistive technology regarding learning and instruction for students with learning, neurological, physical, social-emotional, developmental disability, or mental health disorders.

#### Role of the Quality Education Council.

The QEC must develop strategic recommendations to improve outcomes for students with disabilities or special needs within the program of Basic Education for the common schools, taking into consideration the work of the Commission. Any recommendations for modifications

to the program of Basic Education must consider the needs of students with disabilities or special needs and must be based on evidence that the programs effectively support the learning of students with disabilities or special needs. The QEC must update the statewide strategic recommendations every four years and include specific strategies to improve outcomes for students with disabilities or special needs.

Emergency Clause.

An emergency effective clause is included to make the bill effective 30 days after signed into law.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect 30 days after signed into law.