
Education Committee

2SSB 5973

Brief Description: Closing the achievement gap in K-12 schools.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Kauffman, McAuliffe, Oemig, Shin, Hobbs, Kohl-Welles and Kline).

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Requires all student-related data from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to be disaggregated by six specified racial or ethnic subgroups and five specified characteristics (such as low-income, special education, migrant, etc.).
- Directs the Professional Educator Standards Board to convene a working group to identify model standards for cultural competency.
- Requires the OSPI to identify and provide guidance to school districts with the largest achievement gaps and assist them in developing alternative route teacher preparation programs.
- Directs the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning to collaborate with the ethnic commissions and representatives from achievement gap study groups to develop a plan for implementing strategies to address the achievement gap.

Hearing Date: 3/20/09

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383)

Background:

The 2008 Legislature commissioned five distinct studies of the achievement gap for groups of K-12 students. Four of the studies were directed by budget provisos in the 2008 supplemental operating budget, and one of the studies was directed by a separate bill. The agencies assigned to conduct the studies were:

- the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning and an advisory committee to conduct the study for African American students;

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.

- the Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs to conduct two distinct studies for Asian American students and Pacific Islander American students;
- the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs to conduct the study for Native American students; and
- the Commission on Hispanic Affairs to conduct the study for Latino students.

The study groups submitted final reports on December 30, 2008. Recommendations from one or more of the achievement gap studies include:

- adopting a data collection, research, and evaluation plan to assess the reduction of gaps in achievement over time;
- revising school improvement plans to focus on efforts to close the achievement gap;
- improving collaboration between K-12 and higher education for preparation of teachers and recruitment and retention of diverse teachers and other educators;
- providing professional development in working with diverse students, parents, and communities; and
- improving parent and community involvement and engagement in public schools.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is in the midst of a multi-year project to improve data collection from school districts. The Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) will be implemented in all school districts beginning in the 2009-10 school year. The current (though not necessarily historical) reporting capacity can provide information for the following student subgroups and characteristics: White, Black, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian Native, Low Income, Transitional Bilingual, Migrants, and Special Education. By the spring of 2010, the reporting capacity will include students covered by Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act.

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) establishes standards for educator certification and approves educator preparation programs. The PESB also oversees several alternate route teacher certification programs offered in collaboration between higher education institutions and school districts, as well as the Recruiting Washington Teachers grant program to encourage multi-cultural and multi-lingual high school students to consider teaching as a career.

Summary of Bill:

Following the priority recommendations from the 2008 achievement gap studies, the Legislature intends to:

- provide resources to support parent and community involvement and outreach efforts;
- require that teachers demonstrate cultural competency in the classroom at each level of state teacher certification and provide opportunities for professional development in cultural competency;
- create alternative routes to teacher certification for paraeducators and individuals in communities surrounding schools that are struggling to address the achievement gap; and
- re-examine the study recommendations regarding data and accountability.

The Legislature finds that disaggregation of information is important to compile and that establishing a single, streamlined discipline data collection system will reduce the administrative burden on schools and districts. The Legislature encourages school districts to consult with the

Office of the Education Ombudsman in developing plans for parent and community involvement.

All student data-related reports required of the OSPI must be disaggregated by at least the following subgroups: White, Black, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian Native, Low Income, Transitional Bilingual, Migrants, Special Education, and students covered by Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act.

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) must convene a working group to identify model standards for cultural competency and make recommendations to the legislative education committees regarding the strengths and weaknesses of those standards. "Cultural competency" includes knowledge of student cultural histories and contexts, as well as family norms and values in different cultures; knowledge and skills in accessing community resources and community and parent outreach; and skills in adapting instruction to students' experiences and identifying cultural contexts for individual students.

The OSPI must identify and provide guidance to school districts that have the largest achievement gaps and should receive priority for assistance in advancing cultural competence skills. The purpose of the assistance is to develop partnerships between teacher preparation programs and school districts to offer alternative route certification programs and to recruit paraeducators and other individuals in the local community to become certified as teachers. To the maximum extent possible, the PESB must coordinate the Recruiting Washington Teachers program with the alternative route programs.

The Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) must work in collaboration with the Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, the Commission on Hispanic Affairs, and the Commission on African American Affairs, as well as representatives from the five achievement gap study groups, to review the 2008 reports and develop a plan for implementation of strategies to address the achievement gap. By January 2010, the CISL must report on the implementation plan, and thereafter must annually report on status and progress.

The bill is null and void without funding in the budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available for substitute bill.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void without funding in the budget.