

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## 2SSB 5973

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Education

**Title:** An act relating to closing the achievement gap in order to provide all students an excellent and equitable education.

**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 History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 3/20/09, 3/27/09 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill  
(As Amended by House)**

- Finds that progress is needed to address the achievement gap and that there is an opportunity to make a strong commitment to closing the gap.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Probst, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Hope, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cox, Dammeier, Hunt, Johnson, Liias, Maxwell, Orwall, Santos and Sullivan.

**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:

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

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#### **Summary of Amended Bill:**

The Legislature finds compelling evidence from five commissioned studies that additional progress must be made to address the achievement gap. The studies contain specific recommendations that are data-driven and drawn from education research as well as the personal, professional, and cultural experience of those who contributed to them. The Legislature finds there is no better opportunity to make a strong commitment to closing the achievement gap.

#### **Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

All provisions of the bill are replaced by a statement of legislative findings that additional progress must be made to address the achievement gap and that there is no better opportunity to make a strong commitment to closing the gap. The underlying bill required 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.). The Professional Educator Standards Board was directed to convene a working group to identify model standards for cultural competency. The OSPI was directed to identify and provide guidance to school districts with the largest achievement gaps and assist them in developing alternative route teacher preparation programs. The CISL was required to collaborate with the various state ethnic commissions and representatives from achievement gap study groups to develop a plan for implementing strategies to address the achievement gap.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available for substitute bill.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The commissioned studies involved professional research, conducted statewide, as well as a tremendous effort from community leaders, advocates, and citizens. It is now the intent to find the commonalities among the study recommendations and move forward. Some commonalities are in the bill, such as the need for disaggregated data. The achievement gap is not a problem unique to Washington. However, what is unique is that the Legislature put forward a community-based effort to identify the root problems and make recommendations. The bill is a work in progress and we will continue to take meaningful steps and try to reach common ground. This brings into focus the achievement gap studies. Work has been done to simplify the language, and suggestions continue to be promoted. The various intent statements are supported, such as parent and community involvement and enhancing cultural responsiveness in current and future educators. If there are going to be Innovation Academies and other model schools, there must be an expectation of positive outcomes to be shared with the education community. There is language in another bill that can be supported to address these issues. Achievement gap studies are not new, but no other study has been done in consultation with students, parents, and elders in each community. This provides a unique and valuable perspective. The reports should be used for decision-making; there are some key items that stand out. At the very least, do no harm.

(In support with amendments) There is no shortage of will in terms of addressing these issues, even in difficult times. The bills can be merged in a way to address the various issues that have been raised. Data must be addressed. A committee is needed to assume an oversight and accountability function. Various programs and current efforts could be redirected. The notion of creating Innovation Academies has been misinterpreted as a pilot project or experiment. We realize they can't be funded now, but science, technology, engineering, and mathematics are the future for many of our communities. What is needed is a plan for phasing-in this vision and retooling current programs.

(In support with concerns) The intent is strongly supported, and this is an important first step to continue the work of the studies. The various bills are very different and there is a fear that the differences are so wide that it will prevent progress. There should be a committee with leadership by community members to synthesize the findings into a single report. We need to find compromise language; we do not want to lose momentum.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Senator Kauffman, prime sponsor; Ben Kodama, Equitable Opportunity Caucus; and Don Woodcock.

(In support with amendments) Vicki Austin, Black Education Strategy Roundtable.

(In support with concerns) Barbara Guzman, Latino/a Educational Achievement Project.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.