

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HCR 4408

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Brief Description: Creating a joint select committee on secondary education.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Ormsby, Dunn and McDermott.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/23/05, 3/28/05 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a joint select committee to study the basic structure of middle schools and high schools and to report back with recommendations for more effective organizational structures.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Santos, Shabro and Tom.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Talcott, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

On studies of student achievement, elementary school students tend to attain higher achievement levels on the state's standards than is true of students in middle schools and high schools. The achievement gap is even higher between American youth and their high school peers in other industrialized countries of the world, a gap that is especially acute in mathematics and science.

The international and state high school achievement gaps may not measure the educational attainment of students who have already dropped out of school. About 66 percent of the state's youth graduate with their peers. That percentage is even lower for students in some demographic categories. About 42 percent of American Indian youth graduate on time. The on-time graduation rate for African American, Hispanic, and limited English proficient youth is under 50 percent. Most youth who don't graduate on time never complete high school.

However, a small percentage of them get General Equivalency Diplomas, or obtain diplomas after either a fifth year in high school or through community or technical college high school completion programs.

Summary of Bill:

A joint select committee is created to examine the basic structure of middle schools and high schools. The task force is composed of eight legislators, four from each legislative chamber, selected from each major caucus by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate.

The joint select committee will:

- examine the rate of academic improvement in middle and high schools;
- review state and national literature on secondary school redesign;
- identify the extent to which high schools have organized to support student learning and improved achievement;
- examine the effect of the current delivery model on achievement gaps and dropout rates;
- examine successful organizational models within the state, nationally, and internationally;
- consult experts and stakeholders, directly or through subcommittees; and
- report its findings and recommendations to the House and Senate committees on education policy by January 15, 2006.

Members of the joint select committee will receive per diem, travel, and staffing support from legislative committee staff.

The task force expires June 30, 2006.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: (In support) Among the toughest issues in education reform is the reform and restructuring of high schools and middle schools. About 34 percent of students drop out of high school. That rate is even higher for children of color. The current high school design contributes to those unacceptably high dropout rates because it doesn't allow all students to succeed. It doesn't always include the three R's for high school - relevance, rigor, and relationship. A national consensus is emerging of the need to reexamine and restructure our middle and high schools. The issue is complex and deserves a thoughtful and careful study.

(In support with concerns) Educators should be included at the table and the interdisciplinary nature of high schools should be honored, without elevating math and science above other subjects in the study.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Quall, prime sponsor; Rainer Houser, Association of Washington State Principals; and Wes Pruitt.

(In support with concerns) Gary King, Washington Education Association; and Bob Butts, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Mary Kenfield, State Parent Teacher Association.