

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2245

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

**Title:** An act relating to middle schools and high schools.

**Brief Description:** Creating a task force to study the basic design of middle schools and high schools.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Quall, Tom, Ormsby, Hunt, Ericks, Haigh and McDermott.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 3/1/05, 3/2/05 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Creates a task force to study the design of middle school and high school and to report back with recommendations for their redesign and improvement.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Santos and Shabro.

**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.

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### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

A task force is created to examine the design of middle schools and high schools. The task force is composed of eight legislators, two school district superintendents, two principals, two school directors, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and one representative each of the Governor, career and technical education, skill centers, and the Gates Foundation. Members of the Legislature will be selected from each major caucus by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate. Task force members representing principals, superintendents, and school directors will be selected by their respective organizations. Legislative committee staff will provide support to the task force.

The task force will:

- examine the rate of academic improvement in middle and high schools;
- review state, national, and international literature on secondary school redesign;
- identify successful models for the organization of middle and high schools;
- identify steps to improve the alignment of secondary schools among themselves and with post secondary education, training, and the world of work; and
- report, by December 15, 2005, with recommendations for the change and improvement of middle schools and high schools. The report will include a description of the roles and responsibilities of various groups in school redesign and improvement.

Successful organizational models include those which:

- reduce dropout rates;
- close achievement gaps;
- accelerate academic improvement;
- improve teaching and learning in mathematics; and
- provide challenging opportunities for students who meet standards early and more flexible options after a student's sophomore year in high school.

Legislators on the task force will receive per diem and travel. The agency or organization that appoints the other members will be responsible for any per diem and travel of its members.

The task force expires June 30, 2006.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

Adds two individuals to the task force, one who represents career and technical education and another who represents skill centers. Instructs the task force to look at international research, as well as state and national models and research. Adds the alignment of middle schools to high schools to the study. Removes references to a plan, and adds an emergency clause.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Testimony For:** (In support of original bill) Student achievement is improving much faster in elementary schools than in middle or high schools. If the state wants to step up the pace in the reform of secondary school education, the relevance and rigor of instruction and the relationships among students and adults in middle and high schools, need to be enhanced. These institutions are complex and difficult to change, so finding successful models that schools could emulate might help accelerate the process. The study envisioned in this legislation would be complementary to the education funding study requested by the Governor. The study should consider the schools in the context of two questions: What do we want for a student who is leaving middle school or high school? And what kind of organizational models might help get us there?

The task force should include a representative of the State Board of Education, and educators and classified staff chosen by the Washington Education Association. It should review secondary school design in other countries and make recommendations for change and improvement that are consistent with education reform. It should also review the alignment of middle schools and high schools.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support of original bill) Representative Hunter, prime sponsor; Michaela Miller, Bruce Kelly, John Hellwich, teachers; Terese Emry, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; and Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

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