
**Early Learning & Children's
Services Committee**

HB 1663

Brief Description: Regarding early child development and learning.

Sponsors: Representatives Kagi, Haler, Walsh, P. Sullivan, Appleton, Green, Seaquist, Fromhold, Hurst, Santos, Roberts, Dickerson, Ormsby, Sells, Conway, Flannigan, Chase, Morrell, Haigh, Sommers, Simpson and Darneille.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes an Early Learning Advisory Council; directs the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to implement a five-star voluntary rating system for child care centers and early education programs; and outlines the private-public responsibilities between the DEL and Thrive By Five Washington.

Hearing Date: 2/6/07

Staff: Chris Alejano (786-7115).

Background:

The 2005 Legislature created a comprehensive education study to include examination of early learning, K-12 education, and higher education. The study effort, chaired by Governor Gregoire, became known as Washington Learns. Washington Learns issued an interim report in November 2005 and final recommendations in November 2006 for consideration by the Legislature.

The Washington Learns recommendations identify a number of strategies intended to create a "world-class, learner-focused, seamless education system for Washington." The strategies are organized around five major initiatives:

1. Early Learning: A Smart Investment
2. Math & Science: A Competitive Edge
3. Personalized Learning: Helping Every Student Succeed
4. College & Workforce Training: Increasing Opportunities

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.

5. Quality & Accountability: Keeping the Promise

The final report also recommends additional work on accountability and education finance, along with development of a ten-year implementation strategy.

The Governor recommends implementation of many of the recommendations of Washington Learns through her proposed budget for the 2007-09 biennium and proposed omnibus legislation.

Summary of Bill:

HB 1663 is the sections of the Governor's Omnibus Education Bill pertaining to early learning and is divided into five main components:

Early Learning Advisory Council. A twenty-five member Early Learning Advisory Council is established to advise the DEL on statewide early learning community needs and progress. The council is also directed to work with the DEL to develop a statewide early learning plan. Council representation criteria and term limits are outlined.

Five-Star Voluntary Rating System. The DEL, in collaboration with community statewide partners, is directed to implement a five-star voluntary rating system for licensed or certified child care centers and early education programs to: 1) Provide information to parents; and 2) Increase the quality of early learning programs.

Information. Upon developing an early learning information system, the DEL will make available to parents timely inspection and complaint information through the internet and other means.

Private-Public Partnerships. The private-public partnership responsibilities between the DEL and Thrive By Five Washington are outlined. The partnership's duties include: 1) Enhancing parent education and support; 2) Working with and complementing existing early learning programs; 3) Accepting and spending funds for quality initiatives; 4) Encouraging local partnership efforts; 5) Assisting the statewide movement to high quality early learning; and 6) Supporting parents as a child's first and best teacher.

Rules Review. The DEL shall review and revise child care provider rules to: 1) Encourage mutual respect among parents, providers, and state staff who enforce rules; 2) Clearly focus on children's safety; and 3) Improve early learning outcomes for children.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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