Course For Public Charter School Plotted in Olympia

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : January 12, 2012 at 5:05 pm

Olympia, WA - Today Sen. Steve Litzow of Mercer Island and Rep. Eric Pettigrew of Seattle announced two education-reform bills intended to improve student achievement and close the educational opportunity gap by establishing a public charter-school system and promoting instructional excellence.“These reform bills will provide the framework required to make sure every classroom throughout the state has a great teacher,” said Litzow, the ranking minority member of the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee. “It is essential that we provide students with the skills to compete in a dynamic and global marketplace. Washington is one of only nine states where the opportunity gap has been growing, meaning this legislation is key to transforming basic education for the benefit of Washington students.” The educator-evaluation bill would expand a pilot program to school districts statewide, giving them a fair and equitable way to ensure excellent instruction in their classrooms. Results would serve to enhance the skills of high-performing teachers and identify professional development opportunities for educators who need additional help.“It’s time to confront the fact that our school system is failing the same set of students, year after year,” said Pettigrew, the majority caucus chair in the House of Representatives. “Traditional efforts over past decades have failed to close the achievement gap, and today we have the opportunity to lay the foundation for a new approach. This bill will provide a much-needed alternative for students who wouldn’t otherwise have one, without compromising the effectiveness of our public school system.”The second bill authorizes public charter schools and the creation of transformation zones to increase the quality of educational opportunities and alternatives for students in persistently low-performing schools. Transformational zones would enable the state to bring in outside administrators to assume management of schools that consistently fail to meet performance measures. Under the charter provision, non-profit entities would be able to establish and operate schools in areas where the most vulnerable student populations are in need.