

RCW 28A.715.005 Findings—Intent—Purpose. (1) The legislature finds that:

(a) American Indian and Alaska Native students make up 2.5 percent of the total student population in the state and twenty-five percent or more of the student population in fifty-seven schools across the state.

(b) American Indian students in Washington have the highest annual dropout rate at 9.5 percent, compared to 4.6 percent of all students in each of grades nine through twelve. Of the students expected to graduate in 2010 because they entered the ninth grade in 2006, the American Indian on-time graduation rate was only fifty-eight percent, compared to 76.5 percent of all students.

(c) The teaching of American Indian language, culture, and history are [is] important to American Indian people and critical to the educational attainment and achievement of American Indian children.

(d) The state-tribal education compacts authorized under this chapter reaffirm the state's important commitment to government-to-government relationships with the tribes that has been recognized by proclamation, and in the centennial accord and the millennium agreement. These state-tribal education compacts build upon the efforts highlighted by the office of the superintendent of public instruction in its 2012 Centennial Accord Agency Highlights, including: The Since Time Immemorial (STI): Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State Curriculum Project that imbeds the history surrounding sovereignty and intergovernmental responsibilities into this state's classrooms; the agency's regular meetings with the superintendents of the seven current tribal schools, as well as the federal bureau of Indian education representatives at the regional and national level on issues relating to student academic achievement, accessing of funding for tribal schools, and connecting tribal schools to the K-20 network; and the recent establishment, in statute, of the office of native education within the office of the superintendent of public instruction.

(e) School funding should honor tribal sovereignty and reflect the government-to-government relationship between the state and the tribes, however the current structure that requires negotiation of an interlocal agreement between a school district and a tribal school ignores tribal sovereignty and results in a siphoning of funds for administration that could be better used for teaching and learning.

(2) The legislature further finds that:

(a) There is a preparation gap among entering kindergartners with many children, especially those from low-income homes, arriving at kindergarten without the knowledge, skills, and good health necessary to succeed in school;

(b) Upon entry into the K-12 school system, the educational opportunity gap becomes more evident, with children of color and from low-income homes having lower scores on math, reading, and writing standardized tests, as well as lower graduation rates and higher rates of dropping out of school; and

(c) Comprehensive, culturally competent early learning and greater collaboration between the early learning and K-12 school systems will ensure appropriate connections and smoother transitions for children, and help eliminate or bridge gaps that might otherwise develop.

(3) In light of these findings, it is the intent and purpose of the legislature to authorize the superintendent of public instruction to enter into state-tribal education compacts. [2013 c 242 § 1.]