

11105136D

**SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 320**  
**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**  
 (Proposed by the Senate Committee on Rules  
 on February 4, 2011)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Miller, Y.B.)

*Directing the Commission on Youth to study how Virginia school children compare academically with students in other countries. Report.*

WHEREAS, virtually everyone would agree on the importance of excellence in education; however, considerable attention is being given to the condition of public education in the United States and how the nation's students lag in academic performance when compared with students in other industrialized nations, particularly in science and mathematics; and

WHEREAS, the 2009 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment, a comprehensive examination that measures international educational levels from poor, underdeveloped nations to the most wealthy, indicates that "out of 34 countries assessed the United States ranked 14th in reading, 17th in science, and 25th in mathematics, and while these recent scores are higher than those from 2003 and 2006, the United States falls far behind the highest scoring countries, including South Korea, Finland, Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai in China, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada"; and

WHEREAS, in announcing the test results, MSNBC reported that "student performance on international assessments is considered especially relevant as today's high school graduates enter a global job market where highly skilled workers are in increasing demand, and that a number of countries have made significant improvements while the U.S. has made only incremental advancements"; and

WHEREAS, the decline in the academic achievement of American students and the failing condition of public education have been prominent among national and state concerns since the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* declared "Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world," and detailed specifically and candidly the problems with the American education system; and

WHEREAS, the national commission responsible for the report wrote, "This report is concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility . . . the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur — others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments . . . education can be both understood and corrected if the people of our country, together with those who have public responsibility in the matter, care enough and are courageous enough to do what is required"; and

WHEREAS, many valiant efforts at the national, state, and local levels have been instituted to reform public education, including student and school accountability and new rigorous requirements in curriculum, assessments, and professional development of teachers; nevertheless, in spite of sporadic successes, the demand for qualified classroom teachers and administrators exceeds the supply, particularly for minority teachers and administrators; the school infrastructure and facilities where many of the neediest of students are concentrated are old, in disrepair, and cannot support modern educational technology; urban and rural school divisions struggle to recruit and retain master teachers; the academic achievement gap between African American, particularly African American males, and other-race students, is large and persistent; more students drop out each year than graduate; education must compete with other funding priorities, and difficult economic times exacerbate funding needs; and too many schools are impeded by inadequate resources, countless noninstructional duties, relentless societal ills that ravage children and youth, and the lack of business and community support and parental involvement; and

WHEREAS, in the early 1980s, the Commonwealth hosted the national meeting on "A Nation at Risk" and joined the ranks of states and public officials to reform and strengthen public education, and the Standards of Learning, the hallmark of educational reform in Virginia, together with other innovative initiatives such as the Preschool Initiative and the Governor's magnet, charter, virtual, laboratory, alternative, dual enrollment, year round, and career and technical education schools, provide increased options to meet the educational needs of students, and significant progress in student achievement has been achieved; and

WHEREAS, public education in Virginia is not immune to the challenges confronting the American education system, and disregarding the distress signs would be imprudent and pose a significant threat to state and national economic status, national security, and success in the global marketplace; and

WHEREAS, Virginia needs a cadre of scientists, engineers, mathematicians, educators, physicians,

60 and entrepreneurs and a steady supply of the brightest minds in all other professions and occupations in  
61 the workplace to maintain our productivity and competitive edge; therefore, it is critical to evaluate the  
62 academic achievement of Virginia's students relative to the reported outpacing in education by  
63 international students to improve and strengthen instruction; now, therefore, be it

64 RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Commission on Youth be  
65 directed to study how Virginia school children compare academically with students in other countries.

66 In conducting its study, the Commission on Youth shall (i) compare the academic achievement of  
67 Virginia's students with that of students internationally for the past five years, especially in reading,  
68 mathematics, and science; (ii) identify features in the education systems of other countries that rank  
69 higher than the United States that may contribute to the academic success of their students; (iii)  
70 determine whether any of these features may be adapted for use in Virginia and the cost of  
71 implementation; (iv) determine whether and what changes in Virginia's public education system are  
72 warranted in light of findings from the comparison of the academic achievement of students in Virginia  
73 with students internationally; and (v) consider other matters related to the objectives of this resolution  
74 and recommend feasible and appropriate options and alternatives.

75 Technical assistance shall be provided to the Commission on Youth by the Division of Legislative  
76 Services and the Department of Education. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance  
77 to the Commission on Youth for this study, upon request.

78 The Commission on Youth shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2011, and the chairman  
79 shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and  
80 recommendations no later than the first day of the 2012 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The  
81 executive summary shall state whether the Commission on Youth intends to submit to the General  
82 Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or  
83 Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of  
84 the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports  
85 and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.