

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6124

As of February 24, 2020

Title: An act relating to establishing a statewide environmental sustainability education program.

Brief Description: Establishing a statewide environmental sustainability education program.

Sponsors: Senators Hunt, Nguyen and Wilson, C.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/15/20.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to contract with a local nonprofit to integrate state learning standards with a model of outdoor field studies and project- and work-based learning opportunities, under certain parameters.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: State Learning Standards. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is required to develop state learning standards identifying the knowledge and skills all public school students need to know and be able to do. Learning standards are based on the student learning goals of basic education, as laid out in statute.

State law also requires OSPI to periodically revise the state learning standards, as needed.

Summary of Bill: OSPI is required to provide state leadership for the integration of environmental and sustainability education (ESE) content with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Subject to appropriation, OSPI must contract with a Washington-based nonprofit community-based organization to integrate state learning standards in English language arts, mathematics, and science with the FieldSTEM model of outdoor field studies and project- and work-based learning 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.

The selected nonprofit organization must work collaboratively with OSPI and educational service districts to:

- build systemic programming connecting administrators, school board, and communities to support teacher practice and student opportunities for the strengthened delivery of ESE;
- support K-12 educators to teach students real-world environmental science and engineering outdoors;
- provide opportunities to engage students in renewable natural resource career awareness; and
- deliver learning materials, opportunities, and resources.

The learning materials, opportunities, and resources the nonprofit delivers must include opportunities outside of the classroom, the encouragement of the application of critical and creative thinking skills, local opportunities to engage students in stewardship projects, work-based learning opportunities in various careers, and models for integrating the Since Time Immemorial curriculum on tribal history, culture, and government.

Priority focus must be given to schools identified for improvement through the Washington school improvement framework and communities historically underserved by science education.

Appropriation: The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 9, 2020.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The Pacific Education Institute has previously worked with the state to advance environmental and sustainability education. The bill would better allow to further educational integration with outdoor opportunities and environmental industries.

CON: The further out from the classroom that policy goes, the less it focuses on the individual students. Funding outside organizations takes away funding from the schools that need it. Curriculum choices can lead to misinformation being taught to students. The naming of an organization in statute could lead to less opportunities for other programs. Mandating project-based learning creates a monopoly on methodology in our districts.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Sam Hunt, Prime Sponsor; Kathryn Kurtz, Executive Director, Pacific Education Institute; Anne Landis, citizen.

CON: Dawn Land, citizen; Sharon Hanek, citizen.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.