
**Technology, Telecommunications
& Energy Committee**

HB 1861

Brief Description: Establishing a statewide web-based clearinghouse for resources and learning tools.

Sponsors: Representatives Tom, Ruderman, Talcott, Priest, McMahan and Anderson.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Washington Digital Learning Commons to establish a web-based clearinghouse for on-line learning programs and resources available anywhere in the state.

Hearing Date: 2/25/03

Staff: Pam Madson (786-7166).

Background:

In 1996, the Legislature authorized the building of an educational telecommunications network known as the K-20 network. It is a high-speed telecommunications backbone that allows use of the Internet and live two-way videoconferencing. The network connects 430 public education sites throughout the state including community and technical colleges, public libraries, regional universities, research institutions, K-12 school districts, and educational service districts. For K-12 school districts, the network provides one central point of connectivity in each school district. It is the responsibility of the school district to connect school buildings or networks within buildings.

In 2002, Governor Locke appointed a task force of representatives from education, business, and government to explore ways to better use the opportunity presented by this existing technology resource. After research into assets and resources available in the state, a look at what other states were doing, and an assessment of the demand for on-line digital learning, the task force made a recommendation to establish a digital learning commons. The commons would provide a web-based portal allowing access to digital resources, learning tools, and on-line course work.

To implement the task force recommendation, a non-profit organization is proposed to build and run the Washington Digital Learning Commons.

The funding over the next two years includes grants from private sector sources (\$3 million) and public sources (\$2 million state general fund request).

Summary of Bill:

The Washington Digital Learning Commons is directed to establish a web-based clearinghouse for on-line learning programs and resources available in the state. The clearinghouse will serve as a central point of information, reference, and review of on-line learning programs.

The clearinghouse must be designed and managed to achieve four objectives: (1) Make more online resources available to teachers; (2) provide students with tools and resources to enrich their educational experience; (3) offer students and families tools and resources that will allow families more direct involvement in their children's education; and (4) create connectivity through existing infrastructure and community assets to avoid expensive and duplicative efforts.

Digital providers will submit descriptions of their on-line program offerings and the clearinghouse will produce a reference grid comparing the various offerings and make the grid available on-line. Links must be available to the various digital providers.

The clearinghouse must be accomplished through a public and private partnership.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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