

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6081

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Ways & Means, February 6, 2014

Title: An act relating to creating a grant program to develop and modernize specialized STEM facilities.

Brief Description: Creating a grant program to develop and modernize specialized STEM facilities.

Sponsors: Senators Dammeier, Mullet, Honeyford, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Conway, McAuliffe and Brown.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 1/16/14, 2/06/14 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6081 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hill, Chair; Honeyford, Capital Budget Chair; Hargrove, Ranking Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Member on the Capital Budget; Ranker, Assistant Ranking Member on the Operating Budget; Bailey, Becker, Billig, Braun, Conway, Dammeier, Fraser, Frockt, Hatfield, Kohl-Welles, Padden, Parlette, Rivers, Schoesler and Tom.

Staff: Brian Sims (786-7431)

Background: State law has established several competitive grant programs, including grants for arts, heritage, social services, youth recreation, and parks and habitat preservation.

In recent legislative sessions, a number of budget provisions and statutes were enacted to improve science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education. In 2010 the Legislature directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to convene a workgroup to develop a comprehensive plan to establish educational pathways from elementary education through postsecondary education and careers in STEM. In 2013 E2SHB 1872 was enacted to improve educational outcomes in STEM. The bill defined STEM literacy, and established the STEM Education Innovation Alliance. The first task of the Alliance is to combine previous STEM education strategic plans into a comprehensive

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STEM Framework for Action and Accountability (Framework). The Alliance must also develop a report card based on the Framework.

E2SHB 1872 also established a statewide STEM organization, contingent on available funding. The organization must identify, test, and develop evidence-based approaches for increasing STEM learning opportunities and improving outcomes that are aligned with the Framework. The statewide organization must, among other duties, promote models of interdisciplinary instruction and project-based STEM learning.

Interdisciplinary instruction and project-based STEM learning often require specialized facilities. Compared to a regular classroom, STEM facilities must ensure student safety while using potentially dangerous materials, tools, and instruments; support the space requirements for equipment and workstations; and provide electrical, information technology, ventilation, water, and gases necessary to support STEM project-based learning.

RCW 28A.150.315 calls for the phase-in of voluntary all-day kindergarten by the 2017-18 school year.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The Legislature recognizes that efforts to improve STEM literacy and phase in state-funded all-day kindergarten are impeded by the lack of adequate school facilities. Specialized STEM facilities are required to improve STEM literacy. Grant programs are established to develop and improve specialized STEM facilities and fund additional classroom space for state-funded all-day kindergarten for public school districts and public charter schools. Grants cover 100 percent of project costs, including design, construction, project management, equipment and fixtures, and necessary information systems upgrades. Only facilities that are at least ten years old and are used for grades nine through 12 are eligible for STEM grants. Grants for kindergarten classrooms are for added space at existing schools and may not be used for portables.

OSPI must administer the grant programs, and must develop grant application materials and rank applications with two difference advisory groups: the statewide STEM organization for STEM grants, and a group selected for their interest in student performance and early education for the kindergarten grants. The bill specifies the criteria for both grant programs.

OSPI and the Governor may request capital budget funding for all, some, or none of the projects on the list. Those requests may modify the rankings of the advisory groups, but must also submit the original ranked lists.

OSPI, in consultation with the STEM Education Innovation Alliance, must prepare a plan to evaluate student outcomes resulting from the grant program.

Reduces appropriations for the school construction assistance program to match current projections which saves \$58 million in bonds. Adds appropriations to support the STEM and all-day kindergarten grant programs at \$25 million for each, for a total appropriation of \$50 million in bonds.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute):

- Adds language from SB 6483 creating a grant program for added classrooms for state-funded all-day kindergarten, and modifies that language to clarify that the all-day kindergarten grant program is not for purchase or lease of portables and is for added space at existing schools. Adds the all-day kindergarten language as a new section in RCW 28A.150 instead of an amendment to RCW 28A.150.315.
- Modifies language for the STEM grant program to clarify the advisory role of the statewide STEM organization.
- Reduces appropriations for the school construction assistance program to match current projections which saves \$58 million in bonds.
- Adds appropriations to support the STEM and all-day kindergarten grant programs at \$25 million for each for a total appropriation of \$50 million in bonds.

Appropriation: Yes. Please refer to the bill.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: Access to a good STEM education means access to many of the high-paying STEM-related jobs in the region. Teachers are excited to implement Next Gen and Common Core science standards, but we lack adequate facilities to do so. Much of the equipment is from the 1960s and is not functional. Having poor facilities sends a message to students that STEM education is not important and not supported. Adequate facilities are needed for a world-class STEM education system. Students need three years of science credits but we lack the facilities to provide that. Better facilities will inspire students to pursue STEM education and become eligible for many of the good-paying biotech jobs in our area. We need better facilities, especially in communities underserved by high quality STEM education. The State Board of Education supports providing adequate facilities for STEM education.

OTHER: The Superintendent of Public Instruction supports providing adequate facilities for STEM education and the link between capital investments and operating budget efforts to improve full funding of basic education. He does not support a delegation of statutory authority to an outside organization, and is willing to work with the sponsors to resolve this issue.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Caroline King, WA STEM; Bethany Sjoberg, Highline Public Schools, Secondary Science Specialist; Ann Morris, Highline Public Schools; Julia Suliman, State Board of Education.

OTHER: Ken Kanikeberg, OSPI.