

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5612

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Education

**Title:** An act relating to Holocaust education.

**Brief Description:** Concerning Holocaust education.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Rivers, Salomon, Frockt, Wilson, C., Carlyle, Billig, Wellman, Zeiger, Warnick, Palumbo, Pedersen, Van De Wege, Hasegawa, Holy, Hunt, Keiser, Kuderer, Liias and O'Ban).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 3/25/19, 4/1/19 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Strongly encourages instruction on the Holocaust in every public middle, junior high, and high school.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to collaborate with an expert organization to develop best practices and guidelines for high quality instruction on the Holocaust and to encourage, support, and train teachers in implementing them.
- Requires middle, junior high, and high schools offering Holocaust instruction to follow the best practices and guidelines, beginning September 1, 2020.
- Directs the OSPI to report to the Legislature with a summary of specified feedback and a recommendation about whether Holocaust instruction should be required in public schools, and if so, in which grades.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Paul, Vice Chair; Steele, Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Volz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Callan, Corry, Harris, Kilduff, Kraft, Ortiz-Self, Rude, Stonier, Thai, Valdez and Ybarra.

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*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.*

**Staff:** Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

**Background:**

Since 1992, public high schools have been encouraged to include instruction on the events of the period in modern world history known as the Holocaust, during which six million Jews and millions of non-Jews were exterminated. Legislation enacted at that time specified that this instruction may also include other examples from both ancient and modern history where subcultures or large human populations have been eradicated by the acts of humankind. In addition, the legislation stated that the studying of this material is a reaffirmation of the commitment of free peoples never again to permit such occurrences.

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**Summary of Bill:**

Holocaust Instruction Encouraged. Language encouraging public high schools to include Holocaust instruction is modified as follows: (1) every public middle school, junior high school, and high school is strongly encouraged to include instruction on the events of the period in modern world history known as the Holocaust—the systemic, German state-sponsored persecution and murder of Jews and other innocent victims by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between the years 1933 and 1945; (2) the instruction may also include other examples of genocide and crimes against humanity; and (3) the studying of this material is intended to: examine the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and intolerance; prepare students to be responsible citizens in a pluralistic democracy; and be a reaffirmation of the commitment of free peoples never again to permit such occurrences.

Best Practices and Guidelines. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in collaboration with an expert Washington nonprofit organization that teaches the lessons of the Holocaust (Holocaust expert), must:

- develop best practices and guidelines for high quality Holocaust instruction, and annually publish them electronically;
- encourage and support middle school, junior high school, and high school teachers in implementing these best practices and guidelines; and
- support and train middle school, junior high school, and high school teachers who teach relevant subjects in using the best practices and guidelines, subject to state funding.

Beginning September 1, 2020, middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools that offer Holocaust instruction must follow the best practices and guidelines.

Reports. By November 14, 2022, the OSPI must collect feedback from Holocaust experts about: how the best practices and guidelines on Holocaust instruction are being implemented statewide; whether, and how, the best practices and guidelines should be modified; the number of teachers trained and supported on using the best practices and guidelines in the past two years; and whether Holocaust instruction should be required in public schools, and if so, in which grades.

By December 12, 2022, the OSPI must work with Holocaust experts to summarize the feedback collected and report it to the Legislature with a recommendation about whether Holocaust instruction should be required in public schools, and if so, in which grades.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) In the 1930's the Nazi's encouraged bullying of Jews, who were marginalized, humiliated, and assaulted. Many Jews were placed in concentration camps, their homes and businesses ransacked, their synagogues torched, and their families murdered. Dehumanizing people causes great harm. The Holocaust demonstrates that moral values can be corrupted when racial, religious, and political differences are more important than humanity.

Nothing like the Holocaust should ever happen again. A majority of millennials do not recognize the term Holocaust. People who do not think that genocide is a threat to humanity should look to current events. War is a part of history text books, so genocide and human rights should be. The Holocaust Center for Humanity is the expert on Holocaust education in Washington. The Center provides resources and programs to schools. The center's teacher training program is at capacity.

Discrimination and hate based incidents in schools negatively impact the school community and increase fear among students. Hate crimes have increased, as student knowledge of the Holocaust has decreased. Studies indicate that Holocaust education decreases bias and increases acceptance. Many school subjects have an established curriculum that all teachers follow, but there is no set protocol for how teachers teach the Holocaust. This can lead to misinformation and inequitable time spent on the subject. Children deserve a curriculum that fosters critical thinking, compassion, and cultural responsiveness

Quality Holocaust education makes a profound difference in students' lives—with engagement comes buy-in and with buy-in comes learning. Students want to learn more about what, why, and how such terrible things could happen. It is an effective way for students to learn about the escalation and consequences of hate, and ways to confront stereotyping and scapegoating. Holocaust education restores student's sensitivity in spite of their differences. Students become more resistant to negative influences. Students come to wonder what they would do in that situation, and more importantly what they will do now in the face of hate.

This bill will ensure that Holocaust education, and other genocides and crimes against humanity, are taught in a quality, effective, age-appropriate, and historically accurate manner. It will provide training and best practices for educators.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Dee Simon, Joe Lewinsohn, Lauren Bear, Paul Regelbrugge, and Mario Balit-Baiamonte, Holocaust Center for Humanity.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** Jerry Price, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.