

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5576

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 22, 2019

Title: An act relating to establishing a comprehensive initiative to increase learning opportunities and improve educational outcomes in climate science literacy.

Brief Description: Improving climate science education.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, C., Nguyen, Palumbo, Warnick, Frockt, Hunt, Kuderer and Saldaña.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/18/19, 2/22/19 [DP-WM, w/oRec, DNP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Modifies the required common school curriculum to include instruction in science with special reference to the environmental and sustainability standards.
- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to establish and manage a grant program to create and implement plans to provide teacher training in Next Generation Science Standards, including climate science standards.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hunt, McCoy, Mullet, Pedersen and Salomon.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Hawkins, Ranking Member; Holy and Padden.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Wagoner.

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

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.

Background: School Curriculum in Washington State. Common schools in Washington are subject to curriculum requirements set by state law. These requirements include that all common schools provide instruction in, among other things, reading, arithmetic, and science with special reference to the environment. The Legislature added the science requirement in 1987. In addition, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) may prescribe other required curriculum areas by rule.

Science and Environmental Learning Standards. Based on the provisions in state law, OSPI requires instruction about conservation, natural resources, and the environment be provided at all grade levels. Rules also state this instruction be done in an interdisciplinary manner through science, the social studies, the humanities, and other appropriate areas with an emphasis on solving the problems of human adaptation to the environment.

In 2009, OSPI published the Integrated Environmental and Sustainability K-12 Learning Standards, to be integrated into core content areas and all grade levels. In 2014, these standards were updated to reflect the Next Generation Science Standards, which were adopted in 2013.

Summary of Bill: Common School Curriculum. The required common school curriculum is updated to include science with special reference to environmental and sustainability standards.

Grant Program for Teacher Training in Next Generation Science Standards. OSPI must establish and manage a grant program for nonprofit community-based organizations and educational service districts to create and implement plans to provide teacher training in Next Generation Science Standards, including climate science standards.

In administering the grant program, OSPI must use available learning resources and share training resources as open educational resources. Grant awards must be prioritized for comprehensive and targeted comprehensive schools, as well as communities historically underserved by climate science education. The grant program is subject to appropriation.

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

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2019.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Climate change is a threat to our public health and is not adequately represented in academic curriculums. Changes in climate especially affect vulnerable populations, and more can be done to make sure students are aware of its impacts. Innovative training in this subject can serve rural populations. Those that are most affected by climate change are not receiving the training and education that they need. Education is necessary to give students the tools necessary to combat climate change. Students believe that these topics should be taught starting at a young age.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Claire Wilson, Prime Sponsor; Andrew Eyers, ESD 113; Ellen Ebert, OSPI; Aide Villalobos, Teacher; Rhonda Hunter, citizen; Greg Rock, Carbon Washington; Abby Ruskey, Governor's STEM Alliance and US Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development; Kainoa Higgins, Tacoma Public Schools and City University.

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