
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5878

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2022 Regular Session

By Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Rolfes, Wellman, Hunt, Lovick, Nobles, and C. Wilson)

READ FIRST TIME 01/31/22.

1 AN ACT Relating to visual and performing arts instruction;
2 amending RCW 28A.230.020; adding a new section to chapter 28A.230
3 RCW; and creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** Washington state has long led the way in
6 creating arts education policy. Washington state was one of the first
7 states to adopt visual and performing arts graduation requirements.
8 Our state has a two-credit visual and performing arts graduation
9 requirement, although the second credit may be waived in certain
10 circumstances. Our state has also been a leader by formally declaring
11 the arts including dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and media as
12 core content areas in the definition of basic education. However,
13 there is a very large gap between policy and practice in our state.
14 While most high schools offer a range of arts courses, it is not
15 uncommon for middle schools to offer only one of the arts, usually
16 music, and for elementary schools to offer no formal arts instruction
17 at all, during the regular school day. When arts instruction is
18 offered, it is often as an extracurricular activity, a volunteer
19 docent program, or as a program which meets far less often than other
20 core subjects do. Further, students who perform poorly on
21 standardized tests in math and English often have what little arts

1 instruction they would normally receive taken away, in favor of
2 remediation in the test subject areas. Our students who live in low
3 socioeconomic areas tend to perform worse on standardized tests. As a
4 result, poorer students in our state tend to be denied arts
5 instruction at a higher rate than students from economically stable
6 homes and neighborhoods. The evidence of the multiple benefits of
7 arts education is voluminous and undeniable. The arts are not only a
8 vehicle for doing better at other subjects; they have immense value
9 in their own right and should be taught as stand-alone disciplines,
10 the way our laws and policies are written. The legislature intends to
11 clarify, for schools and school districts, the importance of arts
12 education and to bring our schools' practices in line with our state
13 and federal laws and policies, and the promises made to our
14 communities, by ensuring formal instruction in the core disciplines
15 of visual and performing arts for all Washington students, regardless
16 of their family's socioeconomic status or the relative affluence of
17 the neighborhood in which they live.

18 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28A.230.020 and 2013 c 23 s 48 are each amended to
19 read as follows:

20 All common schools shall give instruction in reading,
21 handwriting, orthography, written and mental arithmetic, geography,
22 the history of the United States, English grammar, visual and
23 performing arts, physiology and hygiene with special reference to the
24 effects of alcohol and drug abuse on the human system, science with
25 special reference to the environment, and such other studies as may
26 be prescribed by rule of the superintendent of public instruction.
27 All teachers shall stress the importance of the cultivation of
28 manners, the fundamental principles of honesty, honor, industry and
29 economy, the minimum requisites for good health including the
30 beneficial effect of physical exercise and methods to prevent
31 exposure to and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, and
32 the worth of kindness to all living creatures and the land. The
33 prevention of child abuse may be offered as part of the curriculum in
34 the common schools.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.230
36 RCW to read as follows:

37 (1) Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, Washington state
38 public schools shall offer regular instruction in at least one visual

1 art and at least one performing art, throughout the academic school
2 year. Each student must receive instruction in at least one arts
3 discipline throughout their K-8 education experience. For grades nine
4 through 12, all students must be given the opportunity to take arts
5 coursework each academic year.

6 (2) Arts instruction must take place during the regular school
7 day, with instruction time for these courses being equal to
8 instruction time devoted to other core subject areas.

9 (3) Instruction for these arts courses must be given by qualified
10 dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts specialists in the
11 area being taught. These instructors may be a staff member hired
12 solely for the purpose of teaching arts courses or existing staff
13 members who have attained the necessary training and endorsements.

14 (4) Instruction under this section must be solely for the arts
15 discipline in the skills and craft of each specific arts discipline
16 as their own end, rather than as a vehicle to enhance learning in any
17 other nonarts subject area. If schools wish to integrate or infuse
18 the arts into other subject matter, they must do so in addition to
19 the regular, formal arts instruction required by this section.

20 (5) The arts instructors in each school district, as subject
21 matter experts, shall be consulted and given an equal part in the
22 decision process to determine which specific visual and performing
23 arts courses to offer at given grade levels, so that instruction is
24 properly aligned to students' developmental stages and vertically
25 aligned to give arts-focused students the best chance for success in
26 their arts college or career pathway.

27 (6) For the purposes of this section, "public schools" has the
28 same meaning as in RCW 28A.150.010.

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