AN ACT Relating to school library information and technology programs; amending RCW 28A.320.240; adding new sections to chapter 28A.320 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. The legislature finds that students with access to school library information and technology programs staffed by qualified teacher-librarians have improved school and life outcomes, including higher academic achievement, increased graduation rates, and increased preparedness for college or career pathways. Unfortunately, not all students have access to these programs statewide, leading to disparate outcomes. Lack of access to these programs disproportionately impacts low-income families and families of color. Recent findings show that access to high-quality school libraries was one of the most significant factors in closing the literacy gap for students experiencing poverty. Additionally, the legislature finds that the rise of misinformation and disinformation available through the internet necessitates comprehensive instruction by a qualified teacher-librarian in information literacy, digital citizenship, and media literacy for all K-12 students. The value of these programs was apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. School districts with qualified teacher-librarians and strong school library
information and technology programs were better able to support teachers, students, and families during remote learning.

The legislature has shown support for school library information and technology programs through the passage of legislation clearly defining both programs and teacher-librarians. These programs have been acknowledged as critically important to supporting state-mandated learning goals, essential academic learning requirements, and high school graduation requirements through inclusion of both teacher-librarians and library materials as part of basic education in the prototypical school model. Teacher-librarians are seen as critical partners in the education of our students including in the equitable and successful use of educational technology. Despite this continued support from the legislature, data shows large areas of Washington where students do not have access to school library information and technology programs staffed by qualified teacher-librarians.

The legislature intends to provide access to high-quality school library information and technology programs with qualified teacher-librarians for students and staff at all K-12 levels while also recognizing the value of allowing local school boards to decide how to most effectively implement these essential programs for their schools and students.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 28A.320 RCW to read as follows:

By September 1, 2024, each school district must adopt or amend:

(1) A policy that acknowledges the requirement for boards of directors to provide every student with access to school library information and technology programs as specified in RCW 28A.320.240; and

(2) Procedures that describe how students can access school library information and technology resources and materials.

Sec. 3. RCW 28A.320.240 and 2015 c 27 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The purpose of this section is to identify quality criteria for school library information and technology programs that support the student learning goals under RCW 28A.150.210, the state learning standards under RCW
Every board of directors shall provide resources and materials for the operation of a school library information and technology program (as the board deems necessary for the proper education of the district's students or as otherwise required by law or rule of the superintendent of public instruction) ensuring every student in the school district has access to a school library information and technology program as described in this section.

"Teacher-librarian" means a certificated teacher with a library media endorsement under rules adopted by the professional educator standards board.

"School library information and technology program" means a school-based program that is staffed, except as provided under (b) of this subsection, by a certificated teacher-librarian and provides a broad, flexible array of services, resources, and instruction that support student mastery of the state learning standards and state standards in all subject areas and the implementation of the district's school improvement plan.

A school district of the second class, as described in RCW 28A.300.065, may staff a school library information and technology program with a noncertificated staff member if the district has made all reasonable efforts to staff the program with a certificated teacher-librarian. In such a circumstance, a school district is authorized and encouraged to partner with a nonprofit or government entity to provide staffing services including, but not limited to, a library or regional library as defined in RCW 27.12.010, or an institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016.

The teacher-librarian, through the school library information and technology program, shall collaborate as an instructional partner to help all students meet the content goals in all subject areas, and assist high school students completing high school and beyond plans required for graduation.

The teacher-librarian's duties may include, but are not limited to, collaborating with his or her schools to:

(a) Integrate information and technology into curriculum and instruction, including but not limited to instructing other certificated staff about using and integrating information and
technology literacy into instruction through workshops, modeling lessons, and individual peer coaching;

(b) Provide information management instruction to students and staff about how to effectively use emerging learning technologies for school and lifelong learning, as well as in the appropriate use of computers and mobile devices in an educational setting;

(c) Help teachers and students efficiently and effectively access the highest quality information available while using information ethically;

(d) Instruct students in digital citizenship including how to be critical consumers of information and provide guidance about thoughtful and strategic use of online resources; and

(e) Create a culture of reading in the school community by developing a diverse, student-focused collection of materials that ensures all students can find something of quality to read and by facilitating school-wide reading initiatives along with providing individual support and guidance for students.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. A new section is added to chapter 28A.320 RCW to read as follows:

The superintendent of public instruction will provide data, information, best practices, and other assistance to help facilitate school district implementation of this act.

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