

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5478

As of January 23, 2015

Title: An act relating to financing facilities to support education reform.

Brief Description: Financing facilities to support education reform.

Sponsors: Senators Dammeier, Keiser, Honeyford, Angel and Conway.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 1/29/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Lorrell Noahr (786-7708)

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 act 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 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

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workstations; and provide electricity, 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: Specialized STEM facilities must 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 9–12 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 22, 2015.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.