

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5161

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, January 27, 2021

Title: An act relating to the teaching of Washington's tribal history, culture, and government.

Brief Description: Teaching Washington's tribal history, culture, and government.

Sponsors: Senators Wellman, Stanford, Carlyle, Conway, Das, Dhingra, Frockt, Hasegawa, Kuderer, Liias, Lovelett, Nobles, Saldaña and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/18/21, 1/27/21 [DP, DNP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that all school districts incorporate curricula about the history, culture, and government of the nearest federally recognized Indian tribe or tribes into social studies curricula by September 1, 2023.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop and utilize a system to monitor and report on district implementation and compliance of tribal curricula requirements.
- Establishes that all administrator preparation programs integrate information on tribal culture, history, and government into existing programs or courses.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair, K-12; Wilson, C., Vice Chair, Early Learning; Hunt, Mullet and Pedersen.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Signed by Senators Hawkins, Ranking Member; Dozier and McCune.

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: Native American Curriculum. In 2011, the Legislature directed the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to create the Office of Native Education (ONE). ONE must perform several functions, including providing assistance to school districts in meeting the educational needs of Native American students, and facilitating the development and implementation of curricula and instructional materials in native languages, culture and history, and the concept of tribal sovereignty.

The Native American curriculum, titled the Since Time Immemorial (STI) curriculum, was developed by ONE in partnership with public and private agencies and several of the 29 federally recognized Indian tribes whose reservations are located in Washington. STI supports teaching tribal sovereignty, tribal history, and current tribal issues within existing history and other courses at the elementary, middle, and high-school levels. STI curriculum is available online free of charge from OSPI.

In 2015, legislation was enacted to require school districts to incorporate STI curriculum when reviewing or adopting social studies curriculum. Districts must collaborate with local tribes to incorporate curriculum materials and to create programs of classroom and community cultural exchanges.

Teacher and Administrator Preparation Programs. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) is tasked with creating certification requirements for K-12 teachers and school administrators. PESB is in charge of setting standard and program approval for teacher and administrator preparation programs in public and private higher education institutions. Generally, most routes to certification include education requirements as well as graduation from a PESB-approved certification program.

In 1993, the Legislature enacted legislation mandating that teacher preparation program courses in Washington State or Pacific Northwest history, required by statute, incorporate information on the culture, history, and government of the American Indian peoples who were the first human inhabitants of the state and the region.

In 2018, the Legislature required teacher preparation programs to integrate the STI curriculum into existing programs or courses and allowed programs to modify the curriculum in order to incorporate elements that have a more regionally specific focus.

Summary of Bill: By September 1, 2023, all school districts must incorporate curricula about the history, culture, and government of the nearest federally recognized tribe or tribes into social studies curricula. OSPI must develop and utilize a system to monitor and report on district implementation and compliance with tribal curricula provisions.

Administrator preparation programs in Washington must include information on the culture, history, and government of the American Indian peoples who were the first human inhabitants of the state and region by integrating the tribal curriculum developed by OSPI into existing programs or courses.

Administrator preparation programs may modify the curriculum to incorporate elements that have a regionally specific focus.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Integrating the many cultures of the tribes of our state into education curricula is an issue of equity. Incorporating curriculum into social studies programs will enrich the education of all Washington students and increase cultural competency. This form of education can serve to heal some of the ways in which education was used to assert a particular culture. Administrators also need the content in preparation programs in order to better educate others about the people that have been in our state since time immemorial. The bill addresses important issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Most school districts have incorporated this curriculum, but it is time for the remaining districts to do so as well. Limiting the curriculum to the nearest tribe does not always reflect historical homelands. The bill sets clear expectations for school districts by setting a date for implementation. The bill helps to strengthen the intergovernmental work that has been performed.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Paul Benz, Faith Action Network; Cindy Kelly, Washington State School Directors' Association; Bob Cooper, Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; Rodney Cawston, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Jon Claymore, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

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