

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1609

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Education

**Title:** An act relating to school library information and technology programs.

**Brief Description:** Concerning school library information and technology programs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Eslick, Jacobsen, Dent, Pollet, Graham and Leavitt.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 2/7/23, 2/14/23 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, subject to funding requirements, to establish a grant program to provide funding to Educational Service Districts for employing teacher-librarians assigned to partner with school districts for providing services, resources, and instruction to students and staff in support of student mastery of the state learning requirements.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Shavers, Vice Chair; Rude, Ranking Minority Member; McEntire, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Eslick, Harris, McClintock, Pollet, Sandlin, Steele and Timmons.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Callan, Ortiz-Self and Stonier.

**Staff:** Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

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*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.*

## **Background:**

### Library Information and Technology Programs.

School district boards of directors must provide resources and materials for the operation of school library information and technology (LIT) programs that they deem necessary for the proper education of the district's students or as otherwise required by law or administrative rule.

An LIT program is a school-based program that is staffed 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.

### The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In addition to its constitutional charge of supervising all matters pertaining to public schools, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and its office has numerous and broad responsibilities prescribed in statute, including:

- making rules and regulations necessary for the administration of public education requirements;
- preparing courses of study and other materials and books for the discharge of education duties;
- fulfilling financial responsibilities, including distributing legislatively allocated funds to districts for the operation of the public school system, and awarding numerous state and federally funded grants; and
- satisfying numerous reporting and other duties assigned by the Legislature.

### Educational Service Districts.

Washington has nine regionally based Educational Service Districts (ESDs) that provide cooperative informational services to local school districts and assist the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the State Board of Education in the performance of their duties. Among other responsibilities, the ESDs serve as a depository and distribution center for instructional materials, and they assist school districts in the preparation of their budgets.

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## **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

Subject to funding requirements, the OSPI must establish a grant program to provide funding to ESDs for employing teacher-librarians assigned to partner with school districts for providing services, resources, and instruction to students and staff in support of student mastery of the state learning requirements. The OSPI must also adopt and revise rules as necessary to implement the grant program.

In awarding grants, the OSPI must prioritize applicant ESDs that, as evidenced by applicable statewide data, have the fewest teacher-librarians, either per-student or per-

school, within their jurisdictional boundaries. An ESD that receives a grant remains eligible for receiving a grant in subsequent award cycles.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill changes the original bill by:

- removing all provisions of the underlying bill;
- directing the OSPI, subject to funding requirements, to establish a grant program to provide funding to ESDs for employing teacher-librarians assigned to partner with school districts for providing services, resources, and instruction to students and staff in support of student mastery of the state learning requirements;
- directing the OSPI to prioritize applicant ESDs that have the fewest teacher-librarians, either per-student, or per-school, within their jurisdictional boundaries;
- allowing ESDs to receive more than one grant from the program; and
- directing the OSPI to adopt implementing rules for the grant program.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

### **Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Some school libraries have been eliminated, but they are very important. Kids need libraries and librarians to promote the learning needs of students. Libraries are being lost for budget reasons and staff shortages. The benefits associated with good LIT programs are numerous and librarians provide technology instruction and other benefits. Libraries should be saved.

Washington is thirty-second in the nation for schools with teacher-librarians. Some students must produce multi-week research projects, and librarians provide assistance with those projects. Librarians also support digital citizenship. Current library practices are not equitable. Librarians help with curating digital footprints and managing information and disinformation.

School librarians support a diverse array of learning. It is not entirely clear whether the bill requires on-site teacher-librarians, so this should be clarified.

This bill is about equity and passing it can close gaps in learning. School LIT programs are especially important for more vulnerable students. Teacher-librarians provide many benefits and services, including professional development and teaching online safety. It is

unacceptable that not all students have access to quality LIT programs. Small districts can partner with school districts and Educational Service Districts to have librarians oversee their LIT programs.

Some school districts are considering eliminating librarians in secondary schools. School districts should not be allowed to balance their budgets by eliminating librarians. Librarians create a non-classroom school environment that is steeped in learning. Every school and student deserves a library and librarian.

(Opposed) This bill does not include additional funding, and districts have difficulties filling staffing positions when specialized certificates are needed. This bill will create obligations that many small districts cannot meet.

(Other) All aspects of the prototypical model are underfunded. School districts need flexibility to allocate resources for student needs and local circumstances, but this bill eliminates much-needed flexibility.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Carolyn Eslick, prime sponsor; Sarah Logan, Eryn Duffee, Carolyn Logue, and Elizabeth Roberts, Washington Library Association; Gavin Downing; Anna Hernandez-French, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Kristi Bonds; and Barbara Lachman.

(Opposed) Michael Olsen, Kettle Falls School District.

(Other) Sandy Hayes, Washington State School Directors' Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.