

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1935

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to promoting resource conservation practices that include student education and leadership opportunities in public schools.

Brief Description: Promoting resource conservation practices that include student education and leadership opportunities in public schools.

Sponsors: Representatives Bergquist, McEntire, Ryu, Ramel, Reed, Ormsby, Doglio, Paul, Hackney and Pollet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/15/24, 1/29/24 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a voluntary Washington State Green Schools Program (Green Schools Program) in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to create and expand resource conservation practices in public schools.
- Directs the OSPI to establish and administer a grant program to provide assistance to school districts and public schools for the purpose of creating or expanding resource conservation practices in accordance with the Green Schools Program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Shavers, Vice Chair; McEntire, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Eslick, Harris, Nance, Ortiz-Self, Pollet, Stonier and Timmons.

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.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Rude, Ranking Minority Member; Couture, McClintock and Steele.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

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 (SPI) 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.

The SPI is also required to develop and periodically revise state learning standards that identify the knowledge and skills all public school students need to know and be able to do based on four basic education learning goals established in statute. Fourteen state learning standards have been adopted, including Mathematics, English Arts, Science, and Integrated Environmental and Sustainability standards.

School Sustainability and Resource Conservation Programs.

School sustainability and resource conservation programs have been established federally and locally. One example of a local program is the King County Green Schools Program (KCGSP). The KCGSP was created in 2002 by King County to assist school districts and public and private schools in King County (but outside of Seattle) in starting and improving waste prevention programs, recycling, and other resource conservation practices.

Summary of Bill:

Washington State Green Schools Program.

The Washington State Green Schools Program (Green Schools Program) is established in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to create and expand resource conservation practices in public schools, including:

- waste reduction, energy reduction, water conservation, urban forestry education, and environmental preservation; and
- education and leadership opportunities for students seeking to promote conservation practices in their schools.

The Green Schools Program is voluntary and is intended to:

- complement resource conservation programs for school districts and public schools that are established by counties or other entities by providing increased opportunities for student education and leadership in resource conservation practices;
- provide opportunities for school districts and public schools that are not participating in resource conservation programs to establish and promote resource conservation programs that have student education and leadership opportunities;
- support instruction in climate curricula aligned with the Science and Integrated Environmental and Sustainability state learning standards; and
- provide opportunities for school districts and public schools to collaborate with the Department of Natural Resources for the purposes of schoolyard greening projects, schoolyard forests, and career-connected learning related to natural resource job opportunities.

Grant Program.

Subject to funding provisions, the OSPI is directed to establish and administer a grant program to provide assistance to school districts and public schools for the purpose of creating or expanding resource conservation practices in accordance with the Green Schools Program.

Through the grant program, school districts, charter schools, and state-tribal education compact schools participating in the Green Schools Program may apply for:

- annual project grants of up to \$15,000 per school, per year, in furtherance of the Green Schools Program; and
- grants for stipend funds for school-based advisors that assist students in learning about, promoting, and implementing resource conservation practices in school facilities. Awarded stipend funds may not exceed \$600 per school, per year, but school districts and public schools may provide additional funding for school-based advisors.

Legislative Intent Language—Green Schools Program and Energy Grant Programs.

Provisions specifying legislative intent are included. The intent section includes legislative findings, references the establishment of the Green Schools Program, and specifies that the Legislature intends for the Department of Commerce, when providing funds to school districts through energy grant programs funded in the capital budget, and to the extent practicable, to prioritize school districts that are participating in the Green Schools Program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 10, 2024.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the

bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Students are interested in expanding leadership opportunities related to conservation practices, but local efforts have not always progressed with student interest.

Students worked hard to restart a local green schools program after the pandemic, but with school district budget cuts, this was difficult to accomplish. This bill will help pay for student advisors and the promotion of conservation practices. If passed, participating school districts will have preferred access to capital budget funds for solar panels.

This bill has many great parts and will help schools and communities. Stakeholders are excited about possible partnerships with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and related opportunities for local school gardens.

Stakeholders appreciate the connection to the DNR, including schoolyard greening projects for human and environmental health.

Scientists suggest that we need more action to respond to global warming. Education should be part of that action and this bill will help students learn more about lessening climate impacts.

Green teams involve STEM learning and provide opportunities to learn, educate the community, and form relationships. This bill will make a significant impact for students and communities.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Steve Bergquist, prime sponsor; Anjali Bergquist, Kenneydale Elementary School; Eleanor Thomson, Maplewood Heights Elementary School; Tyrell Hardtke; Brooke Davies, Climate Pledge Arena; and Brian Considine, Department of Natural Resources.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Sara Betnel, Shoreline School Board; Anna Hernandez-French, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Kathryn Kurtz, Pacific Education Institute.