

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 2037

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 15, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to Holocaust and genocide education in public schools.

**Brief Description:** Concerning Holocaust and genocide education in public schools.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Couture, Senn, Leavitt, Fitzgibbon, Rude, Hutchins, Low, Christian, Ramel, Ryu, Ormsby, Barnard, Graham, Callan, Macri, Cheney, Sandlin, Goodman, Caldier, Nance, Riccelli, Reeves, Paul, Pollet, Griffey and Davis).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/10/24, 96-0.

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/15/24 [DPF-WM, DNP, w/oRec].

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Designates April as International Genocide Prevention and Awareness Month to provide space for formal recognition of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide and crimes against humanity.
- Strongly encourages public schools to offer at least one Holocaust and genocide education stand-alone elective available at least once during grades 6-12.
- Requires public schools that serve students in any of grades 6-12 to provide Holocaust and genocide instruction when this topic aligns with the social studies learning standards beginning with the 2027-28 school year.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to report to the Legislature by September 30, 2025 how it will meaningfully include diasporic communities with lived experiences of surviving, being made refugees by, or by otherwise being directly impacted by genocide when

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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.*

collaborating with certain organizations on this instruction.

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass fail and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Hunt and Pedersen.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Nobles, Vice Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

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

**Staff:** Ailey Kato (786-7434)

**Background:** Holocaust and Genocide Instruction. State law strongly encourages public middle, junior high, and high schools to include in its curriculum instruction on the events of the period in modern world history known as the Holocaust, the systemic, German state-sponsored persecution and murder of Jews and other innocent victims by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between the years 1933 and 1945. The instruction may also include other examples of genocide and crimes against humanity. The studying of this material is intended to:

- examine the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and intolerance;
- prepare students to be responsible citizens in a pluralistic democracy; and
- be a reaffirmation of the commitment of free peoples never again to permit such occurrences.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in collaboration with an expert nonprofit organization that teaches the lessons of the Holocaust, must develop best practices and guidelines for high quality instruction and encourage and support teachers. Beginning in 2020, schools that offer Holocaust and genocide instruction must follow these best practices and guidelines.

Subject to appropriations, OSPI must work with an expert nonprofit organization that teaches the lessons of the Holocaust to support and train teachers. The 2023-25 operating budget included \$750,000 each for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 for OSPI to contract with a nonprofit organization for the expansion of comprehensive Holocaust and genocide education.

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Report. In 2019, the Legislature directed OSPI to collect feedback from expert nonprofit organizations about Holocaust and genocide education best practices and guidelines, the number of teachers trained, and whether

instruction should be required.

OSPI submitted a report on these topics in 2022 with recommendations that addressed the following:

- establishing a requirement for all schools to recognize International Genocide Prevention and Awareness month in April;
- strongly encouraging all school districts to offer at least one Holocaust and genocide stand-alone elective; and
- requiring Holocaust and genocide education content be taught in courses that align with the social studies learning standards beginning in the 2027-28 school year.

**Summary of Bill:** International Genocide Prevention and Awareness Month. April of each year is designated International Genocide Prevention and Awareness Month to provide space for formal recognition of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide and crimes against humanity. During this month, each public school must conduct or promote age-appropriate educational activities that provide instruction, awareness, and understanding of the Holocaust and genocide education to all students. These activities may include classroom instruction, guest speaker presentations, school assemblies, and other developmentally appropriate activities.

Stand-Alone Elective. Public schools are strongly encouraged to offer at least one Holocaust and genocide education stand-alone elective available to students at least once during grades 6-12. OSPI must electronically publish, and update as needed, guidance on vertical alignment, materials, and professional learning to support implementation of the stand-alone elective.

Required Holocaust and Genocide Instruction. Beginning with the 2027-28 school year, public middle, junior high, and high schools must provide instruction on the Holocaust when this topic aligns with the social studies learning standards including U.S. history and contemporary world history. The instruction must also include genocides and crimes against humanity in every region of the world and at various points in history.

The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored genocide perpetrated between 1933 and 1945 by the Nazi regime and its collaborators with the aim of annihilating the Jewish people. During the era of the Holocaust, the Nazis also targeted other groups for various reasons, including people with disabilities, the Romani people, political dissidents, and gay men.

Best Practices, Guidelines, and Screening Criteria. OSPI must work with the following organizations to develop best practices and guidelines for high quality instruction on this topic:

- Washington nonprofit organization with expertise in teaching the lessons of the Holocaust;
- other nonprofit organizations with expertise in teaching lessons on genocide and

- crimes against humanity in different regions of the world and at various points in history, particularly including diasporic communities with lived experiences of surviving, being made refugee by, or otherwise being directly impacted by genocide; and
- a public institution of higher education with expertise in advancing knowledge about the Holocaust, genocide, and crimes against humanity that includes curriculum development and teacher training.

Screening criteria designed to eliminate bias in instructional materials must be used when selecting curricula and materials.

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Report. By September 30, 2025, OSPI must report to the Legislature how it will meaningfully include diasporic communities with lived experiences of surviving, being made refugees by, or by otherwise being directly impacted by genocide when collaborating with certain organizations on this instruction. The report must include specified topics.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 30, 2024.

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

**Effective Date:** The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** No public hearing was held.

**Persons Testifying:** N/A

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** N/A