
Education Committee

SSB 6598

Brief Description: Creating the Washington natural science and wildlife education partnership fund.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl-Welles, Horn, Jacobsen, Winsley, Johnson, Prentice, Rossi, Hewitt, Eide, McAuliffe, Rasmussen and Finkbeiner).

Hearing Date: 2/26/02

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

Various nonprofit organizations such as the Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, the Pacific Science Center, the Washington Audubon Society, and the Woodland Park Zoo have educational outreach programs available for schools. These programs are designed to help children learn about science, wildlife, and the environment in a wide variety of ways including the development of materials for in-class curricula, field trips, other out-of-school opportunities, and professional development.

Under current Washington law, all schools give instruction in science with special reference to the environment. Specifically, instruction about conservation, natural resources, and the environment is provided at all grade levels and in an interdisciplinary manner.

Summary of Bill:

The natural science and wildlife education partnership trust fund is established. The trust fund's purpose is to provide for teachers and students natural science and wildlife education that incorporates the state's essential academic learning requirements. The fund, which will be administered by the state treasurer, is intended to be a repository for state appropriations for eligible wildlife education and natural science programs. The trust fund is subject to the allotment process, but no appropriation is required for expenditures.

Money from the fund will be disbursed through a competitive grant-making process to eligible nonprofit organizations that can provide matching funds or in-kind services. The grants may be used for in-service and preservice training, proven programs that teach the essential academic learning requirements in an integrated fashion, and support and equipment

needed for the programs.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction will establish and distribute funding criteria for the grants. Programs that receive the grants must include one or more of the following features:

1. Methods to encourage critical thinking;
2. Integrated, interdisciplinary approaches to natural science and wildlife conservation;
3. Targeting students deemed to be underserved, disadvantaged, or from multicultural backgrounds; and
4. Service to schools that would not otherwise have access to specialized programs in these fields.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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