
Education Committee

HB 2355

Brief Description: Providing for life science learning centers.

Sponsors: Representative Moeller.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to establish a competitive process to solicit and prioritize capital project requests from collaborative Life Science Learning Centers (Learning Centers) and submit the prioritized list in its capital budget request beginning with the 2009-11 biennium.
- Directs the state to provide enhanced operational funding for Learning Centers.
- Appropriates \$13,290,000 from the State Building Construction Account and \$18,750 from the State General Fund to support the Columbia Springs Environmental Education Center.

Hearing Date: 4/5/07

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Life Science Learning Centers offer environmental, science, and outdoor learning experiences for children and adults. They are often operated in collaboration with school districts, local governments, state agencies, higher education institutions, and nonprofit organizations. They may offer instruction for students through field trips, residential camps, and combining field and classroom work projects; teacher training opportunities; and seminars on such topics as habitat restoration, composting, wildlife landscaping, etc. Examples include the Cispus Learning Center in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, the Port Townsend Marine Science Center, the Chewelah Peak Learning Center near Spokane, and the Columbia Springs Environmental Education Center in Vancouver.

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

Summary of Bill:

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in consultation with the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (DCTED), will establish a competitive process to solicit and prioritize capital project proposals from collaborative Life Science Learning Centers (Learning Centers). Applications for funding can be made to the OSPI by partnerships formed to deliver life science educational programs. Partnerships must include at least one school district and may include local governments, state natural resource agencies, community colleges, nonprofit corporations, tribal governments, and others.

The OSPI submits a prioritized list of Learning Center capital projects to the Governor and the Legislature in the OSPI's biennial capital budget request beginning with the 2009-11 biennium. After the Legislature has approved a specific list of projects, the DCTED manages appropriate contracts with the applicants. The contracts must require that capital improvements are held by the grantee for a specified period of time and that facilities are used for the express purpose of the grant.

The state must provide operational funding for Learning Centers through an enhanced funding formula. The funds flow through the OSPI to participating school districts, but state agencies and public colleges and universities who are Learning Center partners are also eligible to receive operational funding. Part of the funding is for administrative operations of the Learning Centers.

Appropriation: The sum of \$13,290,000 is appropriated for the 2007-09 biennium from the State Building Construction Account to the OSPI for construction of the Columbia Springs Environmental Education Center. The sum of \$18,750 is appropriated for the 2007 fiscal year from the State General Fund to the OSPI for operational expenses of the Columbia Springs Environmental Education Center.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.