

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5378

As Passed Senate, March 3, 2009

Title: An act relating to digital learning program accreditation.

Brief Description: Regarding accreditation of digital learning programs.

Sponsors: Senator Eide.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/26/09, 2/09/09 [DP, w/oRec].
Passed Senate: 3/03/09, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Kauffman, Vice Chair, Early Learning; Oemig, Vice Chair, K-12; King, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Holmquist, Jarrett, McDermott and Tom.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Roach.

Staff: Juliana Roe (786-7438)

Background: Under current law, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has the authority to adopt rules regarding digital programs and full-time equivalent students who receive instruction through digital programs. One of these rules includes the requirement of state-funded public schools or public school programs that provide digital learning programs to receive accreditation through the state accreditation or regional accreditation programs.

Summary of Bill: State-funded public schools or public school programs that provide digital learning programs must be accredited through the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools, a national accreditation program, or an accreditation program listed by OSPI with the endorsement of the Washington Coalition for Online Learning.

Appropriation: None.

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.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Online learning programs are essential to the future of our children. We want accountability, accessibility, and to make sure that our schools are accredited. There would be nothing worse than not allowing students to get credits for courses that they have completed. Although the current statutory language requires that digital programs must be accredited, we included more specific language in this bill.

CON: One concern is that some programs are currently not accredited even though the accreditation requirement exists. We should require that both the provider and the contractor be accredited.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Eide, prime sponsor; Ron Mayberry, Federal Way Internet Academy and Washington Coalition of Online Schools; Judy Margrath-Huge, Digital Learning Commons; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

CON: Lile Holland, Washington Association for Learning Alternatives.