

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6081

As of January 15, 2014

Title: An act relating to creating a grant program to develop and modernize specialized STEM facilities.

Brief Description: Creating a grant program to develop and modernize specialized STEM facilities.

Sponsors: Senators Dammeier, Mullet, Honeyford, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Conway, McAuliffe and Brown.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 1/16/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Brian Sims (786-7431)

Background: State law has established several competitive grant programs, including grants for arts, heritage, social services, youth recreation, and parks and habitat preservation.

In recent legislative sessions, a number of budget provisions and statutes were enacted to improve science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education. In 2010 the Legislature directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to convene a workgroup to develop a comprehensive plan to establish educational pathways from elementary education through postsecondary education and careers in STEM. In 2013 E2SHB 1872 was enacted to improve educational outcomes in STEM. The bill defined STEM literacy, and established the STEM Education Innovation Alliance. The first task of the Alliance is to combine previous STEM education strategic plans into a comprehensive STEM Framework for Action and Accountability (Framework). The Alliance must also develop a report card based on the Framework.

E2SHB 1872 also established a statewide STEM organization, contingent on available funding. The organization must identify, test, and develop evidence-based approaches for increasing STEM learning opportunities and improving outcomes that are aligned with the Framework. The statewide organization must, among other duties, promote models of interdisciplinary instruction and project-based STEM learning.

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.

Interdisciplinary instruction and project-based STEM learning often require specialized facilities. Compared to a regular classroom, STEM facilities must ensure student safety while using potentially dangerous materials, tools, and instruments; support the space requirements for equipment and workstations; and provide electrical, information technology, ventilation, water, and gases necessary to support STEM project-based learning.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature recognizes that specialized STEM facilities are required to improve STEM literacy. A competitive grant program is established to develop and improve specialized STEM facilities for public school districts and public charter schools. Grants cover 100 percent of project costs, including design, construction, project management, equipment and fixtures, and necessary information systems upgrades. Only facilities that are at least ten years old and are used for grades 9-12 are eligible.

OSPI must administer the grant program, and must develop grant application materials in consultation with the statewide STEM organization. The statewide STEM organization must rank the applications according to four criteria:

- the extent existing STEM facilities are inadequate;
- a demonstration that existing STEM faculty are in place and are qualified to deliver an interactive, project-based STEM curriculum, or a plan and budget are in place to recruit or train such faculty;
- the expected gains in STEM literacy resulting from proposed facilities; and
- providing for a broad distribution of grants across the state benefiting rural, suburban, and urban districts.

The Governor may request capital budget funding for all, some, or none of the projects on the list, but must follow the recommended rank order.

OSPI, in consultation with the STEM Education Innovation Alliance, must prepare a plan to evaluate student outcomes resulting from the grant program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 15, 2014.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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