

2SHB 2078 - S COMM AMD
By Committee on Ways & Means

ADOPTED AS AMENDED 03/04/2022

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the
2 following:

3 "NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that time
4 outdoors helps children thrive physically, emotionally, and
5 academically, yet over the past few generations, childhood has moved
6 indoors. On average, today's kids spend up to 44 hours per week in
7 front of a screen, and less than 10 minutes a day doing activities
8 outdoors. For too many kids, access to the outdoors is determined by
9 race, income, ability, and zip code. All children deserve equitable
10 access to outdoor spaces where they can learn, play, and grow, but
11 current access to outdoor educational opportunities is inequitable.

12 (2) From stress reduction to improved focus and engagement, and
13 better academic performance, outdoor-based learning helps kids
14 thrive. Research shows participants in outdoor educational activities
15 have higher graduation rates, improved behavior in school and
16 relationships with peers, higher academic achievement, critical
17 thinking skills, direct experience of scientific concepts in the
18 field, leadership and collaboration skills, and a deeper engagement
19 with learning, place, and community. Outdoor educational programs
20 also offer new opportunities for work-integrated learning in science,
21 natural resources, education, land management, agriculture, outdoor
22 recreation, and other employment sectors. Outdoor-based learning
23 activities can also be a key element in the larger system of regular
24 outdoor instructional time and outdoor experiences that includes STEM
25 fields, after-school programs, summer camps, 4-H, scouting, and
26 related programs which can spark a lifelong appreciation for the
27 natural world.

28 (3) The legislature further finds that accessibility is a major
29 obstacle to universal outdoor education. Most sites lack
30 accommodation for children with disabilities and support staff for
31 children who need social and emotional support. In addition, some

1 youth may experience cultural barriers to outdoor learning
2 experiences.

3 (4) Therefore, the legislature intends to establish a statewide
4 grant program and corresponding outdoor education experiences program
5 to address these needs and to ensure that all students have a chance
6 to benefit from outdoor education.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300
8 RCW to read as follows:

9 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
10 specific purpose, or within funding made available, the outdoor
11 learning grant program is established. The purpose of the grant
12 program is to develop and support educational experiences for
13 students in Washington public schools.

14 (2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall
15 administer the grant program in accordance with this section.

16 (3) Within existing resources, the Washington state parks and
17 recreation commission, the department of natural resources, the
18 Washington department of fish and wildlife, the Washington department
19 of agriculture, and the Washington conservation commission may
20 partner with the office of the superintendent of public instruction
21 to provide relevant expertise on land management and work-integrated
22 learning experiences and opportunities.

23 (4) Beginning in the 2022-23 school year, the office of the
24 superintendent of public instruction shall award grants to eligible
25 school districts, federally recognized tribes, and outdoor education
26 program providers. The office may consult with the Washington
27 recreation and conservation office in awarding grants under this
28 section.

29 (5)(a) The grant program must consist of two types of grants,
30 including:

31 (i) Allocation-based grants for school districts to develop or
32 support educational experiences; and

33 (ii) Competitive grants for federally recognized tribes and
34 outdoor education providers to support existing capacity and to
35 increase future capacity for outdoor learning experiences.

36 (b) In implementing student educational experiences under this
37 section, school districts and outdoor education providers should
38 ensure equitable access for students in all geographic regions, and
39 high levels of accessibility for students with disabilities.

1 (6) Beginning in 2024, the office of the superintendent of public
2 instruction, in accordance with RCW 43.01.036, must submit an annual
3 report to the appropriate committees of the legislature with an
4 evaluation of the program established by this section. The report may
5 include information on other outdoor education and instructional time
6 efforts and how they compare with programs funded through the outdoor
7 learning grant program.

8 (7) For the purposes of this section, "school districts" includes
9 state-tribal education compact schools established under chapter
10 28A.715 RCW.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300
12 RCW to read as follows:

13 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
14 specific purpose, the outdoor education experiences program is
15 established as a program within the outdoor learning grant program
16 established in section 2 of this act. The purpose of the outdoor
17 education experiences program is to develop and support outdoor
18 learning opportunities for 5th and 6th grade students in Washington
19 public schools, with related opportunities for high school students
20 to volunteer as counselors. The program will consist of hands-on
21 learning experiences that: Are three to five days in duration and up
22 to four nights; are overnight or consecutive day programs when
23 overnight programs are impractical due to health or cultural
24 considerations; and have a focus on environmental education aligned
25 with the Washington state learning standards and the development of
26 social and emotional learning skills.

27 (2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may
28 work with a statewide nonprofit organization representing school
29 principals to create guidelines for the program established by this
30 section.

31 (3) In implementing the program established by this section, the
32 priority focus of the office of the superintendent of public
33 instruction must be given to schools that have been identified for
34 improvement through the Washington school improvement framework and
35 communities historically underserved by science education. These
36 communities can include, but are not limited to, federally recognized
37 tribes, including state-tribal education compact schools, migrant
38 students, schools with high free and reduced-price lunch populations,
39 rural and remote schools, students in alternative learning

1 environments, students of color, English language learner students,
2 and students receiving special education services.

3 **Sec. 4.** RCW 28A.300.790 and 2018 c 266 s 410 are each amended to
4 read as follows:

5 (1) The superintendent of public instruction, subject to
6 conformity with application or other requirements adopted by rule,
7 shall approve requests by public schools as provided in RCW
8 28A.320.173 to consider student participation in seasonal or
9 nonseasonal outdoor-based activities, including programs established
10 in accordance with section 2 of this act, and the outdoor education
11 experiences program established in section 3 of this act, as
12 instructional days for the purposes of basic education requirements
13 established in RCW 28A.150.220(5).

14 (2) The superintendent of public instruction shall adopt rules to
15 implement this section."

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16 On page 1, line 2 of the title, after "program;" strike the
17 remainder of the title and insert "amending RCW 28A.300.790; adding
18 new sections to chapter 28A.300 RCW; and creating a new section."

EFFECT: Specifies that the outdoor education experiences may be either overnight or consecutive day programs when overnight programs are impractical.

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