

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5242

As of February 19, 2021

Title: An act relating to supporting media literacy and digital citizenship.

Brief Description: Supporting media literacy and digital citizenship.

Sponsors: Senators Liias, Short, Frockt, Hunt, Keiser, Nguyen, Saldaña and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/25/21, 2/03/21 [DP-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/19/21.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to establish a grant program for supporting media literacy and digital citizenship.
- Requires OSPI to convene two regional conferences on the subject of media literacy and digital citizenship.
- Mandates that at least one grant awarded in each award cycle must be for developing and utilizing a curriculum that contains a focus on synthetic media.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair, K-12; Wilson, C., Vice Chair, Early Learning; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Dozier, Hunt, McCune, Mullet and Pedersen.

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Jeffrey Naas (786-7708)

Background: Digital Citizenship and Media Literacy. Current state law defines digital citizenship as the norms of appropriate, responsible, and healthy behavior related to current technology use, including digital and media literacy, ethics, etiquette, and security. The term also includes the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, develop, produce, and interpret media, as well as Internet safety and cyberbullying prevention and response.

Media literacy, according to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using a variety of forms of communication.

In 2016, the Legislature required OSPI to convene an advisory group to identify successful practices and recommend media literacy and digital citizenship improvements statewide. The Legislature also directed the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) to create model policies on electronic sources and Internet safety, and in 2017, tasked OSPI with providing online resources in these areas.

In addition, each school district must annually review its policy and procedures on electronic resources and Internet safety. In doing so, the district must consider, among other things, best practices, resources, and models for instruction in digital citizenship, Internet safety, and media literacy, including methods to involve parents.

Recent Appropriation. The 2019-21 operating budget allocated \$150,000 in each fiscal year to establish the media literacy grant program. The 2020 supplemental operating budget appropriated an additional \$70,000 for five media literacy pre-conferences that coincide with OSPI's regional conferences in social studies, English language arts, health, and technology. The supplemental budget also directed OSPI to develop a plan for identifying and supporting a group of 100 K-12 media literacy champions from across the state. These provisions in the supplemental budget were vetoed by the Governor.

Synthetic Media. Advances in machine learning led to the development of technology where a person in an existing image or video is replaced with another's likeness and techniques to generate new synthetic audio of a person's speech based on past recordings of the person. Media created through machine learning to falsely depict a person's speech or conduct are known as deepfakes.

Summary of Bill: Grant Program. OSPI shall establish a grant program for supporting media literacy and digital citizenship through school district leadership teams. Leadership teams in this program are to develop a curriculum unit on media literacy, digital citizenship, or both, that may be integrated into social studies, English language arts, or health. The curriculum unit must be made available as an open educational resource.

School districts in the program are expected to evaluate the unit they develop, and are encouraged to work with school district teacher-librarians or a library information technology program, if applicable. A school district that receives a grant under the program is not prohibited from receiving a grant in subsequent grant cycles.

Media Literacy Professional Learning Communities. Up to ten grants a year must be for establishing media literacy professional learning communities to share best practices in the subject of media literacy. These grant recipients are required to develop an online presence for their community to model new strategies and collaborate, and must attend group meetings convened by OSPI to share best practices and strategies.

Synthetic Media. At least one grant awarded in each award cycle must be for developing and using a curricula that contains a focus on synthetic media as a major component.

Regional Conferences on Media Literacy and Digital Citizenship. Subject to funding, OSPI shall convene two regional conferences on the subject of media literacy and digital citizenship. The conferences should highlight work performed by recipients of the grant program created under the bill. The locations for these conferences must include one site in western Washington and one site in eastern Washington.

Appropriation: The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Grants under this program have helped districts create professional learning teams that have helped spread digital literacy into multiple subject areas. Media literacy is an absolute must for students today. These resources can help students become digital leaders in a way that would benefit schools and communities. The expansion of this program to professional learning communities will help spread the knowledge gained from this work. A digital health curriculum can help increase the well-being of students and teens. Media literacy will define citizenship, and civil and social life in our state and nation. Working collaboratively to develop this curriculum has engaged students and teachers in an important topic. Even very young students have frequent interactions in the digital landscape and need the tools to navigate digital media. Students needs the skills to be able to analyze factual information. The majority of digital information is not fact-checked, and we need to educate students on how to perform this work.

OTHER: Teaching students how to distinguish between fact and fiction is crucial, especially in a time where in-person interaction is limited.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Senator Marko Liias, Prime Sponsor; Anne Stewart, North Central ESD; Morgen Larsen, Central Valley High School; Erin Bethel, Tacoma School District; Dennis Small, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Hillary Marshall, Washougal High School Library; Mark Ray; Shana Ferguson, Columbia River High School; Sarah Logan, Washington Library Association School Library Division; Shawn Lee, Teachers for an Informed Public; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

OTHER: Ava Shimp.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Media literacy skills are critical to 21st century learning. The bill provides the opportunity to design curriculum to meet specific needs. Curriculum is expensive to develop. Making the curriculum available as an open educational resource saves the state money. Providing customizable instruction on media literacy helps students grow into responsible productive citizens. It is important educators have access to a diverse curriculum. Lessons must continue to be created as media literacy landscape continually changes. This bill is critical in supporting parents to help inform their children about the importance of acting responsibly online. The bill provides continued modest funding for long-lasting impact. The materials that will be developed are adaptable and age appropriate. Sharing information and strategies at conferences ensures best practices are followed.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Marko Liias, Prime Sponsor; Morgen Larsen, Central Valley High School & Northwest Council for Computer Education; Mark Ray, Washington Library Association; Shelby Reynolds, Northshore School District and Washington State PTA; Shawn Sheller, Action for Media Education; Carolyn Logue, Washington Library Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.