

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5878

As of January 24, 2022

Title: An act relating to visual and performing arts instruction.

Brief Description: Clarifying visual and performing arts instruction.

Sponsors: Senators Rolfes, Wellman, Hunt, Lovick, Nobles and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/24/22.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds visual and performing arts to the statutory list of subjects included in the common school curriculum.
- Requires Washington State public schools to offer regular instruction in at least one visual art and one performing art throughout the academic school year.
- Prohibits waivers from art credit graduation requirements except for approved special education accommodations.
- Requires arts instruction to be performed by qualified specialists who shall be consulted when determining course offerings.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: High School Graduation Requirements. Washington State students must meet various requirements to graduate high school and receive a diploma. Currently, students must:

- complete 24 credits in specified subject areas as determined by the State Board of

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- Education;
- complete a High School and Beyond Plan;
 - meet the requirements of at least one graduation pathway; and
 - satisfy any local requirements.

Of the 24 credits required for graduation, 17 credits are considered core credits and cannot be waived. The remaining seven credits are considered flexible credits that are either an elective credit or personalized pathway requirements. Personalized pathway requirements are up to three credits chosen by a student determined by the student's High School and Beyond Plan.

These rules also specify that one arts credit is considered a core credit, while one credit is considered a flexible credit which may be replaced with a personalized pathway requirement. The essential content in an arts credit may be satisfied in dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts.

School Curriculum in Washington State. Common schools in Washington are subject to curriculum requirements set by state law. These requirements include that all common schools provide instruction in, among other things, reading, arithmetic, and science with special reference to the environment. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction may prescribe other required curriculum areas by rule.

Summary of Bill: Arts Instruction. Visual and performing arts are added to the areas in which all common schools shall give instruction.

Beginning in the 2022-23 school year, Washington State public schools must offer regular instruction in at least one visual art and at least one performing art throughout the academic school year. Each student must receive instruction in at least one arts discipline throughout their K-8 education experience. For grades 9 through 12, all students must be given the opportunity to take arts coursework each academic year.

Arts instruction must take place during the regular school day, with instruction time equal to other core subject areas, and must be given by qualified specialists in the area being taught. Arts instructors shall be consulted and given an equal part in the decision process to determine which specific visual and performing arts courses to offer at given grade levels.

Arts Graduation Requirements. Rules adopted by the State Board of Education may not reduce the number of arts credits required for graduation. Waivers from the art credit requirements may not be permitted for any reason other than approved special education accommodations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 20, 2022.

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: PRO: Arts education is essential to our economy and its impact is all around us. Having a robust arts economy is central to a strong state economy. The reality of how arts education is included or not included in schools across the state is a patchwork of policies that reduces equity. Stronger arts education will help students and our economy. This is not another unfunded mandate, but rather a clarification on a law which has been misinterpreted. Arts help us make sense of our shared experience, and are especially important in modern times.

OTHER: The current language that limits waivers of arts credits could reduce flexibility for high school graduates. Classroom space is at a premium. There is a current teacher shortage in arts education. The quick turnaround of the bill may be difficult to implement.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Christine Rolfes, Prime Sponsor; Karen Hanan, ArtsWA (WA State Arts Commission); Andy Jensen, SCPTSA and Inspire Washington; Mary Bená; James Andrews, Testifying as a private citizen & as Advocacy Co-Chair of the Washington Art Education Association.

OTHER: Linda Drake, State Board of Education; Nasue Nishida, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.