

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5925

As of January 24, 2022

Title: An act relating to establishing the outdoor school for all program.

Brief Description: Establishing the outdoor school for all program.

Sponsors: Senators Hunt, Braun, Lovelett, Nguyen, Saldaña, Van De Wege and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

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

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the outdoor school for all program, subject to appropriations, that provides outdoor school experiences for fifth or sixth grade students in public schools.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to administer the program and award two types of grants to eligible school districts and outdoor school providers starting in the 2022-23 school year.
- Includes this program as one of the outdoor-based activities that student participation in may be considered instructional days.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: State law allows public schools to develop curricula that:

- links student learning with engagement in seasonal or nonseasonal outdoor-based activities, including activities related to academic requirements in science, health and fitness, and career and technical education;
- aligns with the state learning standards that are a component of the state's

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- instructional program of basic education; and
- includes locally administered competency based assessments that align with the standards.

Public schools that develop this curricula may request authorization from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to consider student participation in outdoor-based activities as instructional days for the purposes of basic education requirements. OSPI must adopt rules to approve these requests.

Each school district's K-12 basic educational program must consist of a minimum of 180 school days per year.

Summary of Bill: Outdoor School for All Program. Within amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, or within funding made available, the outdoor school for all program is established. The purpose of the program is to develop and support outdoor school experiences for all fifth or sixth- grade students in public schools. The program also provides opportunities for high school students to volunteer as counselors.

The program consists of hands-on outdoor school experiences that are three to five days and zero to four nights, residential, or day programs. The program focuses on environmental education aligned with state learning standards and development of social and emotional skills.

Guidelines and Grants. OSPI must administer the program and may work with a statewide nonprofit organization representing school principals to create guidelines for the program. Within existing resources, other specified agencies may partner with OSPI for expertise on land management and career connected learning.

OSPI must award two types of grants to eligible school districts and outdoor school providers starting in the 2022-23 school year:

- allocation-based grants for school districts to develop or support outdoor school experiences; and
- competitive grants for outdoor school providers designed to support existing capacity and increase future capacity.

OSPI may consult with the Washington Recreation and Conversation Office on outdoor school grants. School districts and outdoor school providers should ensure equitable access for students in all geographic regions and high levels of accessibility for students with disabilities.

Instructional Days. The outdoor school for all program is included as one of the outdoor-based activities that may part of curricula that public schools develop and student participation in these activities may be considered instructional days.

Report. Beginning in 2024, OSPI must submit an annual report to the Legislature with an evaluation of the program and may include reporting on instructional time efforts and how they integrate with the program.

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

Fiscal Note: Partial 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: PRO: Outdoor learning can greatly benefit students of all ages and provides a variety of hands-on learning experiences. The biggest barrier for outdoor learning is access and resources. This bill would make outdoor learning available to 5th or 6th grade students. These experiences will help to develop passion and commitment in the next generation, so they can become stewards and caretakers of our state's lands and waters. Outdoor learning builds confidence, independence, critical thinking, collaboration, and leadership in students. It can enrich their education in an interdisciplinary way, and it broadens their horizons and connection to and their place in the natural world. Outdoor school is a memorable experience and can change students' lives. Students have been through so much during COVID-19 and have been on screens a lot. Outdoor learning can begin to help heal students.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Sam Hunt, Prime Sponsor; Liza Rankin , School Board Director, Seattle Public Schools; Hilary Franz, Department of Natural Resources; Roberta MacFarland, Highline Public Schools - Waskowitz; Hanford McCloud, Nisqually Huckleberry Camp; CHase Buffington, Cispus Learning Center; Rex Burkholder, Oregon Outdoor Education Coalition; Emmett O'Donnell; Ray Yurkewycz, Mount St. Helens Institute; Roz Thompson, Association of Washington School Principals.

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