
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2078

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2022 Regular Session

By House Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Rule, Barkis, Ryu, Fitzgibbon, Simmons, Shewmake, Berry, Leavitt, Berg, Senn, Callan, Dent, J. Johnson, Kloba, Bergquist, Chambers, Wicks, Orwall, Tharinger, Taylor, Klippert, and Pollet)

READ FIRST TIME 02/03/22.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing the outdoor school for all
2 program; amending RCW 28A.300.790; adding new sections to chapter
3 28A.300 RCW; and creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

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

14 (2) From stress reduction to improved focus and engagement, and
15 better academic performance, outdoor-based learning helps kids
16 thrive. Research shows participants in outdoor educational activities
17 have higher graduation rates, improved behavior in school and
18 relationships with peers, higher academic achievement, critical
19 thinking skills, direct experience of scientific concepts in the
20 field, leadership and collaboration skills, and a deeper engagement
21 with learning, place, and community. Outdoor educational programs

1 also offer new opportunities for work-integrated learning in science,
2 natural resources, education, land management, agriculture, outdoor
3 recreation, and other employment sectors. Outdoor-based learning
4 activities can also be a key element in the larger system of regular
5 outdoor instructional time and outdoor experiences that includes STEM
6 fields, after-school programs, summer camps, 4-H, scouting, and
7 related programs which can spark a lifelong appreciation for the
8 natural world.

9 (3) The legislature further finds that accessibility is a major
10 obstacle to universal outdoor education. Most sites lack
11 accommodation for children with disabilities and support staff for
12 children who need social and emotional support. In addition, some
13 youth may experience cultural barriers to outdoor learning
14 experiences.

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

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

21 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
22 specific purpose, or within funding made available, the outdoor
23 learning grant program is established. The purpose of the grant
24 program is to develop and support educational experiences for
25 students in Washington public schools.

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

28 (3) Within existing resources, the Washington state parks and
29 recreation commission, the department of natural resources, the
30 Washington department of fish and wildlife, the Washington department
31 of agriculture, and the Washington conservation commission may
32 partner with the office of the superintendent of public instruction
33 to provide relevant expertise on land management and work-integrated
34 learning experiences and opportunities.

35 (4) Beginning in the 2022-23 school year, the office of the
36 superintendent of public instruction shall award grants to eligible
37 school districts and outdoor education program providers. The office
38 may consult with the Washington recreation and conservation office in
39 awarding grants under this section.

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

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

5 (ii) Competitive grants for outdoor education providers to
6 support existing capacity and to increase future capacity for outdoor
7 learning experiences.

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

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

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

21 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
22 specific purpose, the outdoor education experiences program is
23 established as a program within the outdoor learning grant program
24 established in section 2 of this act. The purpose of the outdoor
25 education experiences program is to develop and support outdoor
26 learning opportunities for 5th and 6th grade students in Washington
27 public schools, with related opportunities for high school students
28 to volunteer as counselors. The program will consist of hands-on
29 learning experiences that: Are three to five days in duration and up
30 to four nights; are residential or day programs; and have a focus on
31 environmental education aligned with the Washington state learning
32 standards and the development of social and emotional learning
33 skills.

34 (2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may
35 work with a statewide nonprofit organization representing school
36 principals to create guidelines for the program established by this
37 section.

38 (3) In implementing the program established by this section, the
39 priority focus of the office of the superintendent of public

1 instruction must be given to schools that have been identified for
2 improvement through the Washington school improvement framework and
3 communities historically underserved by science education. These
4 communities can include, but are not limited to, tribal nations
5 including tribal compact schools, migrant students, schools with high
6 free and reduced-price lunch populations, rural and remote schools,
7 students in alternative learning environments, students of color,
8 English language learner students, and students receiving special
9 education services.

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

12 (1) The superintendent of public instruction, subject to
13 conformity with application or other requirements adopted by rule,
14 shall approve requests by public schools as provided in RCW
15 28A.320.173 to consider student participation in seasonal or
16 nonseasonal outdoor-based activities, including programs established
17 in accordance with section 2 of this act, and the outdoor education
18 experiences program established in section 3 of this act, as
19 instructional days for the purposes of basic education requirements
20 established in RCW 28A.150.220(5).

21 (2) The superintendent of public instruction shall adopt rules to
22 implement this section.

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