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**SENATE BILL 5905**

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**State of Washington**

**67th Legislature**

**2022 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Hunt, Nguyen, and Saldaña; by request of Office of the Governor

Read first time 01/19/22. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing the outdoor school for all  
2 program; amending RCW 28A.300.790 and 28A.320.173; adding a new  
3 section to chapter 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.  
13 Current access to outdoor school is inequitable mostly due to funding  
14 and administrative constraints.

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

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

9 (3) The legislature further finds that accessibility is a major  
10 obstacle to universal outdoor school. Most sites lack accommodation  
11 for physically challenged children and support staff for children  
12 with mental or emotional challenges are needed. In addition, some  
13 youth may experience cultural barriers to outdoor school experiences.  
14 The legislature intends to establish a statewide program to address  
15 all these needs and to ensure all students have a chance to benefit  
16 from outdoor school.

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

19 (1) Within amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, or  
20 within funding made available, the outdoor school for all program is  
21 established. The purpose of the outdoor school for all program is to  
22 develop and support outdoor school experiences for all 5th or 6th  
23 grade students in Washington public schools with opportunities for  
24 high school students to volunteer as counselors. The program will  
25 consist of hands-on outdoor school experiences that are three to five  
26 days and zero to four nights, residential or day programs, and have a  
27 focus on environmental education aligned with the Washington state  
28 learning standards and the development of social and emotional  
29 learning skills.

30 (2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall  
31 administer the outdoor school for all program in accordance with this  
32 section.

33 (3) (a) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may  
34 work with a statewide nonprofit organization representing school  
35 principals to create guidelines for the outdoor school for all  
36 program.

37 (b) Within existing resources, the Washington state parks and  
38 recreation commission, the department of natural resources, the  
39 Washington department of fish and wildlife, the Washington department

1 of agriculture, and the Washington conservation commission may  
2 partner with the office of the superintendent of public instruction  
3 for expertise on land management and career connected learning.

4 (4) The office of the superintendent of public instruction,  
5 alongside the Washington recreation and conservation office, shall  
6 award grants to eligible school districts and outdoor school  
7 providers starting in the 2022-23 school year.

8 (a) The outdoor school for all program will consist of two types  
9 of grants including:

10 (i) Allocation-based grants for school districts to develop or  
11 support outdoor school experiences; and

12 (ii) Competitive grants for outdoor school providers designed to  
13 increase capacity for outdoor school experiences.

14 (b) School districts and outdoor school providers should ensure  
15 equitable access for students in all geographic regions and high  
16 levels of accessibility for students with disabilities.

17 (5) The office of the superintendent of public instruction will  
18 submit an annual report, beginning in 2024, to the appropriate  
19 committees of the legislature with an evaluation of the outdoor  
20 school for all program and may include reporting on all outdoor  
21 education and instructional time efforts and how they integrate with  
22 the outdoor school for all program.

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

25 (1) The superintendent of public instruction, subject to  
26 conformity with application or other requirements adopted by rule,  
27 shall approve requests by public schools as provided in RCW  
28 28A.320.173 to consider student participation in seasonal or  
29 nonseasonal outdoor-based activities, including the outdoor school  
30 for all program established in section 2 of this act, as  
31 instructional days for the purposes of basic education requirements  
32 established in RCW 28A.150.220(5).

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

35 **Sec. 4.** RCW 28A.320.173 and 2018 c 266 s 409 are each amended to  
36 read as follows:

37 (1) Public schools may develop curricula that:

1 (a) Links student learning with engagement in seasonal or  
2 nonseasonal outdoor-based activities, including activities related to  
3 academic requirements in science, health and fitness, ~~((and))~~ career  
4 and technical education, and the outdoor school for all program  
5 established in section 2 of this act;

6 (b) Aligns with the ~~((essential—academic))~~ state learning  
7 ~~((requirements))~~ standards under RCW 28A.655.070 that are a component  
8 of the state's instructional program of basic education; and

9 (c) Includes locally administered competency based assessments  
10 that align with the Washington state learning standards.

11 (2) Public schools that develop curricula under this section may  
12 request authorization from the superintendent of public instruction  
13 as provided in RCW 28A.300.790 to consider student participation in  
14 seasonal or nonseasonal outdoor-based activities as instructional  
15 days for the purposes of basic education requirements established in  
16 RCW 28A.150.220(5).

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