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**SENATE BILL 5551**

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**State of Washington 69th Legislature 2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Wellman, Cortes, Harris, Hasegawa, Liias, and Slatter

AN ACT Relating to school library information and technology programs; amending RCW 28A.320.240; adding a new section to chapter 28A.320 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28A.30 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that students with access to school library information and technology programs staffed by qualified teacher-librarians have improved school and life outcomes, including higher academic achievement, increased graduation rates, and increased preparedness for college or career pathways. Unfortunately, not all students have access to these programs statewide, leading to disparate outcomes. According to recent data collected by the Washington library association, nearly 60 percent of school districts in Washington have no certified teacher-librarian running their school library information and technology programs. Lack of access to these programs disproportionately impacts low-income families and families of color. Recent findings show that access to high-quality school libraries was one of the most significant factors in closing the literacy gap for students experiencing poverty. Additionally, the legislature finds that the rise of misinformation and disinformation available through the internet necessitates comprehensive instruction by a qualified teacher-librarian in information literacy, digital citizenship, and media literacy for all K-12 students. The value of these programs was apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. School districts with qualified teacher-librarians and strong school library information and technology programs were better able to support teachers, students, and families during remote learning.

The legislature has shown support for school library information and technology programs through the passage of legislation clearly defining both programs and teacher-librarians. These programs have been acknowledged as critically important to supporting state-mandated learning goals, essential academic learning requirements, and high school graduation requirements through inclusion of both teacher-librarians and library materials as part of basic education in the prototypical school model. Teacher-librarians are seen as critical partners in the education of our students including in the equitable and successful use of educational technology. Despite this continued support from the legislature, data shows large areas of Washington where students do not have access to school library information and technology programs staffed by qualified teacher-librarians.

The legislature intends to provide access to high-quality school library information and technology programs with qualified teacher-librarians for students and staff at all K-12 levels while also recognizing the value of allowing local school boards to decide how to most effectively implement these essential programs for their schools and students.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.320 RCW to read as follows:

By September 1, 2026, each school district must adopt or amend:

(1) A policy that acknowledges the requirement for boards of directors to provide every student with access to school library information and technology programs as specified in RCW 28A.320.240; and

(2) Procedures that describe how students can access school library information and technology instruction, resources, and materials.

**Sec.**  RCW 28A.320.240 and 2015 c 27 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The purpose of this section is to identify quality criteria for school library information and technology programs that support the student learning goals under RCW 28A.150.210, the ((~~essential academic learning requirements~~)) state learning standards under RCW 28A.655.070, and high school graduation requirements adopted under RCW 28A.230.090.

(2) Every board of directors shall provide resources and materials for the operation of a school library information and technology program((~~s as the board deems necessary for the proper education of the district's students or as otherwise required by law or rule of the superintendent of public instruction~~)). Each student shall have access to a school library information and technology program, as determined by the board of directors and consistent with the requirements of this section.

(3) "Teacher-librarian" means a certificated teacher with a library media endorsement under rules adopted by the professional educator standards board.

(4)(a) "School library information and technology program" means a school-based program that is staffed, except as provided under (b) of this subsection, by a certificated teacher-librarian and provides a broad, flexible array of services, resources, and instruction that support student mastery of the ((~~essential academic learning requirements~~)) state learning standards and state standards in all subject areas and the implementation of the district's school improvement plan.

(b) A school district of the second class, as described in RCW 28A.300.065, may use a noncertificated staff member to oversee a school library information and technology program if the district has made all reasonable efforts to use a certificated teacher-librarian. In such a circumstance, a school district is authorized and encouraged to partner with a nonprofit or government entity to provide for the requirements of the school library information and technology program including, but not limited to, a library or regional library as defined in RCW 27.12.010, or an institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016. The school library information and technology program must remain school-based and may not operate at a satellite location.

(5) The teacher-librarian, through the school library information and technology program, shall collaborate as an instructional partner to help all students meet the content goals in all subject areas, and assist high school students completing high school and beyond plans required for graduation.

(6) The teacher-librarian's duties may include, but are not limited to, collaborating with his or her schools to:

(a) Integrate information and technology into curriculum and instruction, including but not limited to instructing other certificated staff about using and integrating information and technology literacy into instruction through workshops, modeling lessons, and individual peer coaching;

(b) Provide information management instruction to students and staff about how to effectively use emerging learning technologies for school and lifelong learning, as well as in the appropriate use of computers and mobile devices in an educational setting;

(c) Help teachers and students efficiently and effectively access the highest quality information available while using information ethically;

(d) Instruct students in digital citizenship including how to be critical consumers of information and provide guidance about thoughtful and strategic use of online resources; ((~~and~~))

(e) Create a culture of reading in the school community by developing a diverse, student-focused collection of materials that ensures all students can find something of quality to read and by facilitating school-wide reading initiatives along with providing individual support and guidance for students; and

(f) Direct classified staff, including library technicians, library assistants, and others, to implement the school library information technology program.

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

The superintendent of public instruction shall oversee school library information and technology programs, as defined in RCW 28A.320.240 by, at a minimum:

(1) Identifying a single point of contact at the office of the superintendent of public instruction to respond to library information and technology inquiries;

(2) Gathering and analyzing data related to the implementation of school library information and technology programs and the assessment of students' educational technology literacy and technology fluency;

(3) Providing technical assistance on establishing school library and information technology programs within existing resources to schools that do not have school library and information technology programs, beginning with schools receiving funding under Title I, part A of the federal elementary and secondary education act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 6301 et seq.;

(4) Assisting public schools with the effective implementation of school library information and technology programs;

(5) Supporting public schools in evaluating how they are providing opportunities for every student to meet educational technology literacy and fluency goals under RCW 28A.655.075;

(6) Identifying and sharing assessments and other measures of students' knowledge and skill in the areas of educational technology literacy and technology fluency, under RCW 28A.655.075;

(7) Producing, in consultation with the Washington state school directors' association, guidance for school districts on the best models and practices for school library information and technology programs; and

(8) Facilitating adoption of statewide library standards using American association of school librarians and international society for technology in education standards as the basis.

**--- END ---**