

Initiative No. 1681

January 10, 2020

BILL REQUEST - CODE REVISER'S OFFICE

BILL REQ. #: I-3740.1/20

ATTY/TYPIST: KT:eab

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

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AN ACT Relating to visual and performing arts instruction; amending RCW 28A.230.020; adding a new section to chapter 28A.230 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) Washington state has long led the way in creating arts education policy. Washington was one of the first states to adopt visual and performing arts graduation requirements. Our state has a two credit visual and performing arts graduation requirement, although the second credit may be waived in certain circumstances. We have also been a leader by formally declaring the arts (dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and media) as core and basic. However, there is a very large gap between policy and practice in our state. While most high schools offer a range of arts courses, it is not uncommon for middle schools to offer only one of the arts (usually music) and for elementary schools to offer no formal arts instruction at all, during the regular school day. When arts instruction is offered, it is often as an extracurricular

activity, a volunteer docent program, or as a program which meets far less often than other core subjects do. Further, students who perform poorly on standardized tests in math and English often have what little arts instruction they would normally receive taken away, in favor of remediation in the test subject areas. Our students who live in low socioeconomic areas tend to perform worse on standardized tests. As a result, poorer students in our state tend to be denied arts instruction at a higher rate than students from economically stable homes and neighborhoods.

The evidence of the multiple benefits of arts education is voluminous and undeniable. The arts are not only a vehicle for doing better at other subjects; they have immense value in their own right and should be taught as stand-alone disciplines, the way our laws and policies are written. This initiative aims to clarify, for schools and districts, the importance of arts education and to bring our schools' practices in line with our state and federal laws and policies, and the promises made to our communities, by ensuring formal instruction in the core disciplines of visual and performing arts for all Washington students, regardless of their family's socioeconomic status or the relative affluence of the neighborhood in which they live.

(2) The requirements of this initiative are meant to be met using existing funds.

Sec. 2. RCW 28A.230.020 and 2013 c 23 s 48 are each amended to read as follows:

All common schools shall give instruction in reading, handwriting, orthography, written and mental arithmetic, geography, the history of the United States, English grammar, visual and performing arts, physiology and hygiene with special reference to the effects of alcohol and drug abuse on the human system, science with special reference to the environment, and such other studies as may be prescribed by rule of the superintendent of public instruction. All teachers shall stress the importance of the

cultivation of manners, the fundamental principles of honesty, honor, industry and economy, the minimum requisites for good health including the beneficial effect of physical exercise and methods to prevent exposure to and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, and the worth of kindness to all living creatures and the land. The prevention of child abuse may be offered as part of the curriculum in the common schools.

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.230 RCW to read as follows:

All Washington state public schools shall offer regular instruction in at least one visual art and at least one performing art, throughout the academic school year. Every pupil shall receive instruction in at least one arts discipline, throughout their K-8 education experience. For grades 9-12, all students must be given the opportunity to take arts coursework, each academic year. The current graduation requirement of two visual and performing arts credits shall remain intact; however, this section removes the option to waive the second visual and performing arts credit for any reason other than approved special education accommodations.

This instruction shall take place during the regular school day, with instruction time for these courses being equal to instruction time devoted to the other core subject areas.

Instruction for these arts courses shall be given by qualified dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts specialists in the area being taught. This may be a staff member hired solely for the purpose of teaching arts courses or existing staff members who have attained the necessary training and endorsements.

This instruction shall be solely for the arts discipline; that is, the instruction shall be in the skills and craft of each specific arts discipline as their own end, rather than as a vehicle to enhance learning in any other nonarts subject area. If schools wish to integrate or infuse the arts into other subject matter, they

must do so in addition to the regular, formal arts instruction required by this section.

The arts instructors in each district, as subject matter experts, 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. This is to ensure that instruction is properly aligned to students' developmental stages and to vertically align instruction, giving arts-focused students the best chance for success in their arts college or career pathway.

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