



The Washington State Capitol Building in Olympia. (Washington State Legislature photo)

IN OLYMPIA

Sex education becomes a requirement for state public schools

Opponents fear the content could be graphic and the material too mature for children

By Leona Vaughn
Tuesday, March 10, 2020 9:48am | [NEWS](#) [STATE LEGISLATURE](#)

OLYMPIA — Public school students will soon have a greater understanding of their sexuality, sexual abuse and the importance of consent under a new law passed by Washington state legislators.

Senate Bill 5395 requires all public schools in Washington state to give public school children in kindergarten through 12th grade a comprehensive sexual education. The curriculum must follow certain requirements, including encouraging healthy relationships, teaching students about sexual violence, educating them on consent and being inclusive of all students.

Supporters of the bill claimed that integrating a sexual education curriculum into the public school system would be beneficial to students by giving them a better understanding of sexual health, which will allow them to make better choices in their own relationships.

Some parents and opponents say the curriculum may confuse children, particularly when gender identity issues are discussed. Supporters also argue the curriculum would give children the skills they need to identify

sexual violence and how to respond to it, which could help them avoid situations involving abuse or assault.

According to the Rape, Assault & Incest National Network, “One in nine girls and one in 53 boys under the age of 18 experience sexual abuse or assault at the hands of an adult.”

“I stand here as a victim,” said Rep. Debra Lekanoff, D-Bow, at an earlier House debate. “If I had known then what I know now, I would not be living through the historical trauma that I have to live through every day.”

Opponents of the bill expressed concern it would put children’s’ innocence at risk. The amount of graphic content that may be associated with this subject has upset some parents who believe it’s their responsibility to educate their children on sexual matters.

“I’m not sure why we’re rushing to remove the innocence from our youth,” said Rep. Mike Steele, R-Chelan, at the earlier debate. “We put so much on them already. ... I don’t know why we think it’s appropriate to put more, to put such weight upon their backs at such young ages.”

SB 5395 was passed by the House March 4 with a vote of 56-40. The Senate concurred with the House’s amendments and passed the bill in a late-night session on March 7 with a vote of 27-21. The bill was a straight party-line vote in both chambers, with Republicans opposed.

Recommended for You

K I T S A P
Daily News

© 2020, Kitsap Daily News and Sound Publishing, Inc.

[About Us](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact Us](#)