

Climate Change Education Program

Statutory and/or Budget Language

\$62,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$62,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the creation of a deliberative democratic climate change education program in public high schools based on the Washington student climate assembly pilot program. The office must use the funding to develop and promote a full curriculum for student climate assemblies that can be replicated in public high schools across the state and to fund a part-time statewide coordinator position to oversee program outreach and implementation. By January 1, 2025, the office must collect and evaluate feedback from teachers, students, local government employees, and elected officials participating in the pilot program and report to the legislature on options to improve, expand, and extend the program.

Purpose

This funding was provided to support the creation of a full curriculum for a deliberative democratic climate change education program that can be replicated at high schools across the state, including a statewide coordinator to oversee program outreach and implementation.

Description of Services Provided

To fulfill the requirements of this proviso, OSPI determined a contract would be needed to complete the work. In accordance with DES policies, OSPI initiated a Request for Proposals process to collect bids to develop the full curriculum for this program. After the competitive process, Pacific Education Institute (PEI) was awarded the contract for this scope of work. In FY 24, PEI named Lisa Eschenbach as the statewide coordinator for the project and developed professional learning and materials for three subcontracted educators from different school districts. The professional learning and materials provided the educators with opportunities to learn about and pilot a “Student Climate Assembly” in their classrooms during the 2023–24 school year. This work was used to develop the complete curriculum for educators in high schools across Washington in FY 25.

Criteria for Receiving Services and/or Grants

The contract required PEI to identify three school districts with varied geographical locations and socioeconomic student populations to participate in the pilot program.

Beneficiaries in the 2023-24 School Year

Number of School Districts	3
Number of Schools	3
Number of Students	177



Number of Educators 3
Other 15

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No

State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2024	\$62,000	\$61,250

Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (e.g. School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2024	3 Districts, 3 Schools, 177 Students, 3 Educators, 15 Other

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

This was the first year of this funding.

Program Evaluation or Evaluation of Major Findings

During the end of the 2023–24 school year, three educators from Marysville, Snohomish, and Ellensburg were subcontracted to participate in professional learning about the project and pilot a Student Climate Assembly in their classrooms.

Educators localized the process for their specific school community. In Marysville, students presented their climate action plans to five members of the Tulalip Tribes Natural Resources Department. In Ellensburg, students presented to district leaders, PEI, and this project's statewide coordinator. In Snohomish, students presented their climate action plans within their class.

The pilot teachers all said they would do the project again; however, they would adjust it to better meet the needs of their students and community. Educators wanted more professional learning, more connections to civics, examples of student work, teaching techniques (including classroom discourse strategies), and more explanation on some of the climate change information presented.

One educator found that teaching about climate change wasn't as hard as they thought it would be. Although they were worried about their students' climate anxiety, they did not see an increase in their anxiety.

Major Challenges Faced by the Program

This proviso required a competitive RFP process to execute. Due to the timelines necessary for this process through DES, the contract was not executed until the end of February 2024. This left limited time for the contractors to begin designing materials and professional learning, establishing partners in school districts to develop them, and piloting the materials with the chosen educators.

High School Civics requires specific topics to be taught in accordance with [RCW 28A.230.094](#). While teachers utilizing a Student Climate Assembly in their Civics classes fits within these topics, it has been challenging for the contractors to design the Student Climate Assembly to fit within the semester course while considering the RCW and Washington State Learning Standards for Social Studies requirements.

Future Opportunities

This contract is ongoing and will conclude in September 2024, with a final curriculum due to be posted on the Open Educational Resources (OER) Commons at that time.

OSPI has determined that there are many models for climate integration in schools. Further data is needed to determine educator interest in and effectiveness of the student climate assembly curriculum in high schools as a productive model for climate integration.

Other Relevant Information

The proviso's language required that the program be replicable in public high schools across the state. As most courses are designed and approved at the local level, there are few courses the curriculum could be aligned to and still be able to be replicated across the state. High School Civics, which is governed by [RCW 28A.230.094](#), is the exception to this. OSPI determined that to create a replicable program across the state, the curriculum developed must be aligned with the High School Civics course.

The proviso called for the program to be created based on the "Washington student climate assembly pilot program." The pilot program referenced is the "[Democracy in Action—Student Climate Assembly](#)," which describes itself as a "guide and toolkit" of resources based on a student climate assembly that happened in Bellingham High School. Puget Sound Educational Service District funded this pilot program through grant money they received from the Science Teacher Training (ClimeTime) proviso in the 2022–23 school year.

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

[Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2024 Fiscal Year.](#)

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