

1.1 A bill for an act

1.2 relating to natural resources; creating Outdoor School for All grant program;
1.3 appropriating money; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter
1.4 84.

1.5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.6 Section 1. **LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.**

1.7 (a) Minnesota is known for its rich outdoor heritage and ethic. The state prides itself on
1.8 its close connection to nature through outdoor recreation, appreciation, and conservation
1.9 and is seen as a leader in the country for its residents' relationship with natural resources.
1.10 Yet the state's children today are losing their connection to the outdoors like never before,
1.11 spending up to 44 hours per week in front of a screen and less than 10 minutes each day
1.12 doing activities outdoors. It is well documented and proven that time outdoors helps children
1.13 thrive physically, emotionally, and academically, yet over the past few generations, childhood
1.14 has dramatically moved indoors. For too many kids, access to the outdoors is determined
1.15 by race, income, ability, and zip code. All children deserve equitable access to outdoor
1.16 spaces where they can learn, play, and grow, but current access to outdoor educational
1.17 opportunities is inequitable.

2.1 new opportunities for work-integrated learning in science, natural resources, education,
2.2 land management, agriculture, outdoor recreation, and other employment sectors.
2.3 Outdoor-based learning activities can also be a key element in the larger system of regular
2.4 outdoor instructional time and outdoor experiences that includes STEM fields, after-school
2.5 programs, summer camps, 4-H, scouting, and related programs that can spark a lifelong
2.6 appreciation for the natural world.

2.7 (c) Therefore, the legislature intends to establish a statewide Outdoor School for All
2.8 grant program to support immersive, multiday, accredited overnight outdoor education
2.9 program experiences for students in grades 4 to 8 to address these needs and to ensure that
2.10 all students have a chance to benefit from outdoor education.

2.11 **Sec. 2. [84.9766] OUTDOOR SCHOOL FOR ALL; GRANT PROGRAM.**

2.12 Subdivision 1. Establishment. The commissioner of natural resources must establish
2.13 and administer a program to provide grants to learning centers eligible under subdivision
2.14 2 for outdoor education programs serving students in grades 4 to 8.

2.15 Subd. 2. Eligibility. (a) The commissioner may award grants under this section to
2.16 accredited overnight outdoor school providers established under section 84.0875 and to
2.17 other regional nonprofit learning centers offering similar programming.

2.18 (b) To be eligible for a grant under this section, the outdoor education program must:

2.19 (1) provide a multiday, residential educational experience that is comprised mainly of
2.20 outdoor-based learning activities;

2.21 (2) provide students with opportunities to directly experience and understand nature and
2.22 the natural world, including field study opportunities for student learning;

2.23 (3) use a research-based environmental, ecological, agricultural, or other
2.24 natural-resource-based educational curriculum;

2.25 (4) be integrated with local school curricula to help students meet academic standards;

2.26 (5) provide students with opportunities to develop:

3.1 (6) address accessibility of outdoor educational opportunities for underserved students,
3.2 including students with disabilities.

3.3 **Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION; OUTDOOR SCHOOL FOR ALL.**

3.4 \$..... in fiscal year 2024 and \$..... in fiscal year 2025 are appropriated from the general
3.5 fund to the commissioner of natural resources for the Outdoor School for All program under
3.6 Minnesota Statutes, section 84.9766.