
SENATE BILL 5688

State of Washington

64th Legislature

2015 Regular Session

By Senators Litzow, Rolfes, McAuliffe, Fain, Hill, Kohl-Welles,
Mullet, and Billig

1 AN ACT Relating to providing students with skills that promote
2 mental health and well-being and increase academic performance;
3 amending RCW 28A.310.500; adding new sections to chapter 28A.300 RCW;
4 and creating a new section.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The education of children is critically
7 important. In order for children to be ready to learn and ready to
8 ultimately enter the workforce prepared, they need to have academic,
9 social, and emotional skills.

10 Responsible decision making, self management, healthy
11 relationship skills, and self and social awareness are among the
12 tools students need. These essential skills help improve school
13 climate and reduce bullying, discipline issues, dropout rates, and
14 the educational opportunity gap at the same time as they increase
15 mental well-being, student engagement, and academic performance.

16 Schools implementing social emotional learning see large
17 increases in academic performance.

18 Students today experience unfathomable stresses. Over thirty
19 thousand K-12 students are homeless. Thousands experience bullying,
20 depression, abuse, or have witnessed domestic violence or other

1 violence in their communities. Many have lost a parent or suffered a
2 traumatic experience.

3 Emotions and relationships directly affect how students learn and
4 how they use that learning in other contexts. If a student is
5 anxious, afraid, or worried about other stresses in his or her life,
6 those emotions will interfere with attention, memory, and positive
7 behaviors. By developing social and emotional skills, students will
8 be equipped with tools to overcome barriers to their learning and
9 even find solace in education and going to school.

10 The legislature is committed to investing in preventative
11 strategies in schools to increase student mental health and well-
12 being in order to support the education of our state's children.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300
14 RCW to read as follows:

15 (1) The superintendent of public instruction shall convene a work
16 group to recommend comprehensive social emotional learning benchmarks
17 for grades kindergarten through high school that build upon what is
18 being done in early learning. These benchmarks must include, at every
19 grade level, competencies for at least the following:

20 (a) Self management. Regulating one's emotions to handle stress,
21 control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles; achieving
22 personal and academic goals; and expressing emotions appropriately;

23 (b) Self awareness. Accurately assessing one's feelings,
24 interests, and strengths; maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-
25 confidence;

26 (c) Social awareness. Being able to empathize with others;
27 appreciating individual and group similarities and differences;
28 effectively using family, school, and community resources;

29 (d) Relationship skills. Interacting cooperatively with others;
30 resisting inappropriate social pressure; dealing effectively with
31 interpersonal conflict; seeking help when needed; and

32 (e) Responsible decision making. Making decisions based on
33 factors such as ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms,
34 respect for others, and likely consequences; applying decision-making
35 skills to daily situations;

36 (2) The work group shall also develop:

37 (a) Guidance for schools, school districts, and educators in
38 promoting social emotional learning that:

39 (i) Is culturally competent;

1 (ii) Is linguistically appropriate;
2 (iii) Provides a positive learning environment for students;
3 (iv) Is inclusive of parental involvement;
4 (v) Promotes school safety and a positive school climate;
5 (vi) Includes best practices in assisting students through school
6 transitions between elementary, middle, and high school; and
7 (vii) Incorporates best practices to address the mental health
8 continuum of children, from mental well-being and mental health to
9 mental illness, and acknowledges research around adverse childhood
10 experiences;

11 (b) Technical advice on how social emotional learning fits within
12 existing teacher and principal evaluations particularly as it relates
13 to school safety and school climate; and

14 (c) An implementation plan that provides a framework for
15 incorporating social emotional learning and is aligned with other
16 Washington state education initiatives including college and career
17 readiness, STEM education, twenty-first century skills, and the
18 Washington state learning standards.

19 (3) To inform the work of the work group, the office of the
20 superintendent of public instruction shall conduct a survey of
21 schools to ascertain how many schools in the state are implementing a
22 social emotional learning program and to understand individual
23 districts' capacity to implement social emotional learning.

24 (4) The work group must include persons with expertise in social
25 emotional learning, child development, job readiness, and mental
26 health, and the following:

27 (a) One representative from the department of early learning;

28 (b) One representative each from the student support services and
29 teaching and learning departments within the office of the
30 superintendent of public instruction;

31 (c) One representative from the educational opportunity gap
32 oversight and accountability committee;

33 (d) One representative from the office of the education ombuds;

34 (e) One higher education faculty member with expertise in social
35 and emotional learning;

36 (f) One currently employed K-12 educator and one currently
37 employed K-12 administrator;

38 (g) One mental health counselor; and

39 (h) One representative from a school parent organization.

1 (5) The work group shall consult with: School districts;
2 educational service districts; school administrators; principals;
3 teachers; paraeducators; school counselors; community organizations
4 serving youth; a statewide organization with a focus on social
5 emotional learning; federally recognized tribes; the state's four
6 ethnic commissions representing the following populations: African-
7 Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islander
8 Americans; and community organizations representing communities of
9 color, immigrant and refugee communities, parents and students, and
10 homeless children and youth.

11 (6) By October 1, 2016, the work group shall submit a report to
12 the education committees of the legislature, the governor, and the
13 superintendent of public instruction that includes its
14 recommendations for benchmarks, guidance, technical advice, and an
15 implementation plan. The office of the superintendent of public
16 instruction shall make the report available to school districts by
17 including it on the web site.

18 **Sec. 3.** RCW 28A.310.500 and 2013 c 197 s 6 are each amended to
19 read as follows:

20 (1) Each educational service district shall develop and maintain
21 the capacity to offer training for educators and other school
22 district staff on youth suicide screening and referral, and on
23 recognition, initial screening, and response to emotional or
24 behavioral distress in students, including but not limited to
25 indicators of possible substance abuse, violence, and youth suicide.
26 An educational service district may demonstrate capacity by employing
27 staff with sufficient expertise to offer the training or by
28 contracting with individuals or organizations to offer the training.
29 Training may be offered on a fee-for-service basis, or at no cost to
30 school districts or educators if funds are appropriated specifically
31 for this purpose or made available through grants or other sources.

32 (2) Each educational service district shall develop and maintain
33 the capacity to serve as a convener, trainer, and mentor for
34 educators and other school district staff on social emotional
35 learning. An educational service district may demonstrate capacity by
36 employing staff with sufficient expertise to offer the training or by
37 contracting with individuals or organizations to offer the training.
38 Training shall be offered at no cost to school districts or educators

1 if funds are appropriated specifically for this purpose or made
2 available through grants or other sources.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300
4 RCW to read as follows:

5 School districts may use funding provided pursuant to RCW
6 28A.150.260(8) to develop and update school specific action plans to
7 implement multitiered systems of support frameworks and curriculum
8 aligned with the frameworks. These action plans, once implemented,
9 are intended to systemically improve schools' learning climate,
10 student engagement, and academic performance, increase students'
11 mental health and well-being, and reduce student discipline actions.
12 Plans may vary by school. The multitiered systems of support
13 frameworks may include positive behavior interventions and supports
14 and social emotional learning in elementary schools.

15 District-developed action plans shall be submitted to the office
16 of the superintendent of public instruction on an annual basis and
17 the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall make
18 these plans available on its web site.

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