
HOUSE BILL 2239

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2024 Regular Session

By Representatives Timmons and Eslick

1 AN ACT Relating to supporting student well-being through
2 instruction in social-emotional skills; amending RCW 28A.300.288;
3 adding a new section to chapter 28A.320 RCW; adding a new section to
4 chapter 28A.630 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an
5 expiration date.

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

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature recognizes that there
8 is an ongoing youth mental health crisis that requires a thoughtful
9 and effective response strategy. The rates of psychological distress
10 among young people have increased since the COVID-19 pandemic began.
11 Psychological distress can manifest as depression or anxiety,
12 impulsiveness or irritability, substance abuse, as well as suicidal
13 ideations and suicide attempts. Furthermore, a national survey
14 conducted by the centers for disease control and prevention in 2021
15 found that high school students who said they felt close and
16 connected to people at school less frequently reported negative
17 impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their mental wellness.

18 (2) The legislature finds that teaching students how to build the
19 skills to cope with stress, navigate their emotions, build healthy
20 relationships, and develop problem solving skills helps to reduce
21 harmful student behaviors and improve student well-being.

1 (3) The legislature acknowledges that the office of the
2 superintendent of public instruction defines social-emotional
3 learning as the process through which individuals build awareness and
4 skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing
5 relationships, and making responsible decisions that support success
6 in school and in life. As directed by the legislature, the office of
7 the superintendent of public instruction adopted social-emotional
8 learning standards and benchmarks in 2020, but the use of these
9 standards and benchmarks is required only in grades kindergarten
10 through three.

11 (4) The legislature finds that numerous public schools in
12 Washington are teaching students skills that promote social,
13 emotional, behavioral, and mental health and wellness within a
14 prevention-based framework and within a continuum of support, but
15 that many schools do not have the capacity or resources to
16 proactively provide similar student supports.

17 (5) Therefore, the legislature intends to encourage all public
18 schools to provide instruction on skills that promote social,
19 emotional, behavioral, and mental health and wellness inclusive of
20 self-awareness, self-management, self-efficacy, social awareness,
21 social management, and social engagement consistent with the adopted
22 learning standards and benchmarks. The legislature also intends to
23 assist public schools in supporting student well-being through the
24 development of social-emotional skills by distributing funding to the
25 public schools through determinations of financial need.

26 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.320
27 RCW to read as follows:

28 (1) Every school district and public school is encouraged to
29 provide instruction on skills that promote social, emotional,
30 behavioral, and mental health and wellness inclusive of self-
31 awareness, self-management, self-efficacy, social awareness, social
32 management, and social engagement consistent with learning standards
33 and benchmarks adopted by the office of the superintendent of public
34 instruction pursuant to RCW 28A.300.478. It is recommended that any
35 curriculum used to provide instruction in accordance with this
36 section is research-based or evidence-based, developmentally
37 appropriate, linguistically responsive, and culturally sustaining,
38 incorporates elements of universal design, and promotes and supports
39 student learning, mental health, and well-being.

1 (2) School districts and public schools are encouraged to
2 coordinate actions to implement this section with related efforts,
3 such as planning for emotional or behavioral distress in students
4 under RCW 28A.320.127, priorities of school counselors, social
5 workers, and psychologists under RCW 28A.320.280, implementing a
6 comprehensive school counseling program under RCW 28A.320.600, and
7 providing staff training under RCW 28A.415.445.

8 (3) For the purpose of this section, "public school" has the same
9 meaning as in RCW 28A.150.010.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.630
11 RCW to read as follows:

12 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
13 specific purpose, between July, 1, 2024, and June 30, 2029, the
14 office of the superintendent of public instruction shall annually
15 distribute funding to school districts, charter schools, and state-
16 tribal education compact schools for the purpose of supporting
17 instruction in social-emotional learning that is consistent with the
18 learning standards and benchmarks adopted by the office of the
19 superintendent of public instruction under RCW 28A.300.478. The
20 process for distributing funding must be streamlined for the
21 effective delivery of resources to rural and small school districts.

22 (2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must
23 prioritize funding distributed under this section first to the
24 highest poverty school districts, charter schools, and state-tribal
25 education compact schools that are not providing instruction
26 consistent with the social-emotional learning standards and
27 benchmarks, and second to school districts, charter schools, and
28 state-tribal education compact schools in communities identified as
29 highest risk under RCW 28A.300.288 and that provide instruction in
30 social-emotional learning as a component of primary prevention for
31 youth suicide prevention activities.

32 (3) Recipients of the funding under this section must comply with
33 the recommendations under section 2 of this act, including the
34 social-emotional learning curriculum recommendations.

35 (4) As required by the office of the superintendent of public
36 instruction, recipients of the funding under this section must report
37 to the office of the superintendent of public instruction with their
38 perspectives on any student outcomes that were impacted by increasing

1 the instruction in social-emotional learning using the learning
2 standards and benchmarks adopted under RCW 28A.300.478.

3 (5) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must
4 work with state and community partners to implement this section.

5 (6) By October 15, 2029, and in accordance with RCW 43.01.036,
6 the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall submit
7 to the appropriate committees of the legislature a report indicating
8 the recipients of the funding, what each recipient used the funding
9 for, and perspectives on impacted student outcomes.

10 (7) This section expires July 1, 2030.

11 **Sec. 4.** RCW 28A.300.288 and 2014 c 103 s 2 are each amended to
12 read as follows:

13 (1) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall
14 work with state agency and community partners, including prevention
15 experts in the division of behavioral health and recovery of the
16 state health care authority, to assist schools in implementing youth
17 suicide prevention activities, which may include the following:

18 (a) Training for school employees, parents, community members,
19 and students in recognizing and responding to the signs of suicide;

20 (b) Partnering with local coalitions of community members
21 interested in preventing youth suicide; and

22 (c) Responding to communities determined to be in crisis after a
23 suicide or attempted suicide to prevent further instances of suicide.

24 (2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction,
25 working with state and community partners, shall prioritize funding
26 appropriated for subsection (1) of this section to communities
27 identified as the highest risk.

28 (3) The office of the superintendent of public instruction is
29 encouraged to work with state agency and community partners to
30 promote funding opportunities available under this section to
31 eligible schools.

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