
Education Committee

HB 2577

Brief Description: Encouraging locally developed and implemented character education programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Talcott, Haigh, Cox, Schindler, Pearson, Anderson, Carrell, Schmidt, Nixon, Morell, Casada, Esser, Benson, Holmquist, Miloscia, Mitchell, Mulliken, Quall, Woods, Campbell, Ogden and Upthegrove.

Hearing Date: 1/31/02

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

During the 1990's, the Legislature adopted two laws that alluded to the role of schools in character development. In 1993, as part of the state's education reform legislation, the goal of the Basic Education Act was amended as follows:

"The goal of the Basic Education Act for the schools of the state of Washington set forth in this chapter shall be to provide students with the opportunity to become responsible citizens, to contribute to their own economic well being and to that of their families and communities, and to enjoy productive and satisfying lives. To these ends, the goals of each school district, with the involvement of parents and community members, shall be to provide opportunities for all students to develop the knowledge and skills essential to:

- Read with comprehension, write with skill, and communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings;
- Know and apply the core concepts and principles of mathematics; social, physical, and life sciences; civics and history; geography; arts; and health and fitness;
- Think analytically, logically, and creatively, and to integrate experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems; and
- Understand the importance of work and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities."

In 1994, the Legislature added additional language to the Basic Education Act on essential values and character traits. "The Legislature also recognizes that certain basic values and character traits are essential to individual liberty, fulfillment, and happiness. However, these values and traits are not intended to be assessed or be standards for graduation. The

Legislature intends that local communities have the responsibility for determining how these values and character traits are learned as determined by consensus at the local level. These values and traits include the importance of:

- honesty, integrity, and trust;
- respect for self and others;
- responsibility for personal actions and commitments;
- self-discipline and moderation;
- diligence and a positive work ethic;
- respect for law and authority;
- healthy and positive behavior; and
- family as the basis of society."

Since the mid 1990's, a number of schools, school districts, and the Seattle Indian Center have participated in a federal grant program that funds locally developed and supported character education programs. With funding of about \$31,000 per site per year, the five programs each developed unique approaches to character development.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature finds that academic success rests on a foundation of character. The Legislature intends to encourage school districts, in partnership with parents and local communities, to integrate character education into each school's curriculum.

School districts are strongly encouraged to implement character education programs that incorporate into the curriculum the character traits and values identified in the state's basic education laws. The districts are also strongly encouraged to develop the programs in partnership with parents and the entire spectrum of stakeholders in their local communities. When developing the character education programs, the districts shall comply with the Open Meetings Act.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction will collect and make available on its website programs and materials that help teach students how to demonstrate the character traits in a school setting.

\$35,000 is appropriated to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the collection and dissemination of character education programs and materials on the office's website.

Appropriation: The sum of \$35,000.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/23/02.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.