

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## 2SHB 1162

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As of February 19, 2010

**Title:** An act relating to social emotional learning in public schools.

**Brief Description:** Providing for social emotional learning in public schools.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Education Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Dickerson, Quall, Sullivan, Haigh, Orwall, Liias, Takko, Kagi, Green, Simpson, Kenney and Nelson).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/13/10, 59-35.

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/18/10.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Staff:** Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

**Background:** The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) is responsible for developing learning standards or Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) that describe the knowledge and skills all public school students are expected to know and be able to do, based on the Basic Education Goals established in state law. There are EALRs for reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, health and fitness, communication, arts, and technology. The EALRs have been made more specific for each grade level through the Grade Level Expectations (GLEs), also developed by the SPI.

Social and emotional learning is a process for helping children develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness. These skills include recognizing and managing emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically. In Washington, there are some references to social emotional learning skills in the GLEs for health and fitness.

**Summary of Bill:** Social emotional learning is defined as age-appropriate culturally responsive behavioral and emotional management, relationship skills, conflict resolution, interpersonal communication, cooperation, decision making, and planning.

A Social Emotional Learning Public-Private Partnership Account (Account) is created in the custody of the State Treasurer to support the activities of the Office of Superintendent of

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Public Instruction (OSPI) and school districts for social emotional learning. Revenues in the Account may include any appropriations by the Legislature, federal funds, gifts or grants, or other sources. Only the SPI or designee may authorize expenditures.

To the extent funds are available in the Account, the OSPI must promote and encourage incorporation of social emotional learning into basic education instruction in public schools. Activities may include:

- disseminating information about promising curricula and model programs;
- providing guidelines for school districts;
- referring districts to high quality professional development; and
- providing grants to school districts.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Social emotional learning (SEL) skills are the foundation for strong learning, they positively impact student achievement, and are proven to be a powerful tool in classroom management. We have learned in studies that empathy and attachment are crucial to learning, and both have cognitive components. SEL affects a broad range of outcomes, including attitudes, behavior, and academic performance. Students from a board range of socioeconomic status and geographical settings benefit from SEL. Classroom teachers are effective deliverers of SEL. While we want to focus on improving the academic environment, there are barriers to learning that are about what is happening in children's lives and their emotional well being. Unless we get school climate and culture together and are moving forward in positive direction, learning will be negatively effective. Manitou Park Elementary School in Tacoma received curricula and training for social and emotional problems in the classroom saw attitudes of staff transformed—instead of asking "what's wrong with you?" teachers asked "what happened to you?" Calming curriculum to defuse students has reduced fights. Obviously teens will have issues, but with SEL students are equipped to deal with issues and bring them to counselors. Washington High School is a safe and civil school, with a SEL curriculum. As a result, students feel safer and there is a drop in suspensions. SEL is a recommendation of the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee. This bill does not mandate SEL. It creates a fiscal account to be able to promote SEL. It is an important step forward. We had bigger hopes before the recession hit, but money exists from private entities. It makes good sense to find ways to get money to do these things. Federal government is very interested in SEL and may provide money.

CON: While social well being is important to students' learning, it is parents' responsibility to provide these skills. This is not the right time for OSPI to move forward even if funds are available. We are concerned about putting too much on the plate of school districts. This adds another mandate to basic education. Currently, not enough time is spent on the basics.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Dickerson, prime sponsor; Laura Grushong, citizen; Mary Wilson, Tacoma Public Schools; Kevin Haggerty, University of Washington; Robert Harkins, OSPI; Lynne Tucker, NW Exceptional Children; Tom Edwards, Association of Washington School Principals/Franklin Pierce Schools.

CON: Joyce Fiess, Citizens United for Responsible Education; Mitch Denning, Alliance of Educational Association.