

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1004

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Education

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

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

**Sponsors:** Representatives Dickerson, Orwall, Haigh, Kagi, Roberts, Takko, Lias, Rolfes, Hurst, Kenney, Frockt, Goodman and Appleton.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 2/3/11, 2/17/11 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates a Social Emotional Learning Public-Private Partnership Account (Account) to receive any monies appropriated by the Legislature and from other sources.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, if funds are available in the Account, to promote and encourage incorporation of Social Emotional Learning into basic education instruction in public schools.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Lytton, Vice Chair; Billig, Finn, Haigh, Hunt, Ladenburg, Lias, Maxwell, McCoy and Probst.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Dammeier, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Angel, Dahlquist, Fagan, Hargrove, Klippert, Kretz and Wilcox.

**Staff:** Barbara McLain (786-7383).

**Background:**

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

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 state Basic Education Goals. There are EALRs for reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, health and fitness, communication, and the arts. Legislation enacted in 2007 also directed development of EALRs for technology, which were completed in December of 2008. The EALRs have been made more specific for each grade level through the Grade Level Expectations (GLEs), also developed by the SPI. For some EALRs, student performance is measured by state assessments; for others, it is measured through classroom-based assessments.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a term used to describe knowledge and skills in awareness and management of emotions, setting and achieving personal and academic goals, interpersonal skills, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and demonstrating decision-making and responsible behavior. In Washington there are references to some of these skills in the GLEs for health and fitness, such as "understands positive and negative effects of stress and stress management techniques" or "solves conflicts while maintaining safe and respectful relationships." Some other states, including Wisconsin, Ohio, Tennessee, and Illinois have adopted separate SEL standards. In Illinois all school districts are required to adopt a policy for incorporating SEL into their educational program.

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**Summary of Bill:**

The term SEL is defined as age-appropriate behavioral and emotional management, relationship skills, conflict resolution, interpersonal communication, cooperation, decision-making, and planning.

A SEL Public-Private Partnership Account (Account) is created in the custody of the State Treasurer to support the activities of the SPI and school districts in support of the SEL. Revenues in the Account include any appropriations by the Legislature, gifts or grants, federal funds, or other sources. Only the SPI or SPI's designee may authorize expenditures.

To the extent funds are available in the Account, the SPI promotes and encourages incorporation of the SEL into basic education instruction in public schools. Activities could include:

- disseminating information about research-based curricula, model programs, and partnerships with after-school programs;
- providing guidelines for school districts;
- referring districts to high-quality professional development; and
- providing grants to school districts.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Meta-analyses of research have shown that the SEL has a positive effect on student achievement and classroom management. There is some focus on the SEL in early learning, but instruction in knowledge and skills in the SEL should also be part of the K-12 education system, as it is in some other states. The inclusion of after school programs is supported. After school programs support not only academic learning, but also the SEL.

Social, cultural, communication, and planning skills make a huge difference in how successful children are in school and life. Emotions make a difference in how brains work. It is simply not possible to learn when one is angry or fearful. The research indicates that instruction in the SEL skills could make a huge difference in early learning and school outcomes. Some children in special education receive instruction in behavior management and the SEL skills, but all children would benefit. They can be taught to manage their frustrations, stress, and emotions to be successful in a school environment.

The Compassionate Schools Pilot project has changed teachers' perspectives on the need for instruction in the SEL. Compassionate learning communities are being established in a systematic way and are encouraged by the opportunity to make the SEL available to more students. Instruction in the SEL should not be reserved for students whose behaviors are such that they are referred to a counselor. The SEL instruction is preventive. This bill provides an opportunity to help schools integrate the SEL instruction into other instruction. This is not an unfunded mandate; it does not require state funds. If funding were to become available, the SPI would be well poised to support standards, assessments, professional development, and curriculum in this area.

(With concerns) There is little debate about the value of the SEL, but schools need to be committed to the importance of this type of education. Schools are currently focused on academic instruction. There is concern about imposing a new requirement, particularly with no additional funding. This bill could have the opposite effect from what is intended, by causing schools to reject any new requirement. The halls are littered with the bones of various unfunded mandates on school districts.

(Opposed) Basic skills are watered down enough already. This proposal is opposed not because the SEL is not important, but because 50 percent of our high school graduates are in remedial math classes in college. How would the SEL skills be assessed? How would it be determined if a student failed the SEL? There is a public-private partnership account established in the bill. Does this mean it is outside the government realm? Will there be disclosure of how these funds are spent?

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Dickerson, prime sponsor; Janet Frieling, Schools Out Washington; Karen Tvedt, Committee for Children; Diana Stadden, The ARC of Washington State; Elizabeth Frausto, Puget Sound Educational Service District; Melissa Gombosky and Richard Cleveland, Washington School Counselors; and Jessica Vavrus, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

(With concerns) Corine Gregory, Social Smarts.

(Opposed) Joyce Fiess, Citizens United for Responsible Education.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.