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**SENATE BILL 6432**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Litzow, McAuliffe, Rolfes, Fain, Dammeier, Mullet, Carlyle, and Darneille

AN ACT Relating to evaluating student mental health services and providing students with skills that promote mental health and well-being and increase academic performance; amending RCW 28A.310.500; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

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

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

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

Schools teaching developmentally appropriate interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills of social and emotional learning see large increases in academic performance.

Students today experience unfathomable stresses. Over thirty thousand K-12 students are homeless. Thousands experience bullying, depression, abuse, or have witnessed domestic violence or other violence in their communities. Many have lost a parent or suffered a traumatic experience.

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

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

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

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

(2)(a) Each educational service district shall develop and maintain the capacity to serve as a convener, trainer, and mentor for educators, administrators, and other school district staff on social and emotional learning. An educational service district may demonstrate capacity by employing staff with sufficient expertise to offer the training or by contracting with individuals or organizations to offer the training.

(b) Each educational service district must offer training on social and emotional learning, beginning in the 2017-18 school year, at no cost to school districts or educators if funds are appropriated specifically for this purpose or made available through grants or other sources.

(c) The training model and curricula must be based on the recommendations of the office of the superintendent of public instruction's 2016 report on comprehensive benchmarks for developmentally appropriate interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills of social and emotional learning.

(d) An educational service district may work with school districts to create a training model that works best for each school district and educational service district.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The joint legislative audit and review committee shall conduct an inventory of the mental health service models available to students through schools, school districts, and educational service districts and report its findings by October 31, 2016. The report must be submitted to the appropriate committees of the house of representatives and the senate, in accordance with RCW 43.01.036.

(2) The committee must perform the inventory using data that is already collected by schools, school districts, and educational service districts. The committee must not collect or review student-level data and must not include student-level data in the report.

(3) The inventory and report must include information on the following:

(a) How many students are served by mental health services in each school, school district, or educational service district;

(b) How many of these students are participating in medicaid programs;

(c) How the mental health services are funded, including federal, state, and private sources;

(d) Information on who provides the mental health services, including district employees and contractors;

(e) Any other available information related to student access and outcomes.

(4) This section expires July 1, 2017.

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