

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5777

As of February 17, 2019

Title: An act relating to building capacity within the educator workforce to improve student mental health and well-being.

Brief Description: Building capacity within the educator workforce to improve student mental health and well-being.

Sponsors: Senators Brown, Darneille, Walsh, Nguyen, O'Ban, Wilson, C. and Wilson, L..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/15/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Tasks the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) with convening a work group to make recommendations for standards and professional development on student mental health and well-being.
- Directs PESB to implement the work group's recommendations including requiring educators to meet student mental health and well-being standards beginning July 1, 2022.
- Develops a series of online courses for school staff related to behavioral health.
- Requires school districts to use one professional learning day every four years to address student mental health needs and implementing social emotional learning (SEL).
- Directs PESB to report on a SEL micro-credential pilot.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: Standards for Educators and Paraeducators. PESB adopted a set of articulated teacher knowledge, skill, and performance standards for effective teaching. The standards

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must be calibrated for each level along the entire career continuum. PESB also adopted state standards of practice for paraeducators.

Every five years, educators and paraeducators must complete continuing education requirements to renew their certifications and certificates. For some educators, continuing education in specific subjects is required. For example, school physical and mental health professionals must complete training on youth suicide screening and referral.

Professional Learning Days. Beginning with the 2018-19 school year, the Legislature must begin phasing in funding for professional learning days for certificated instructional staff. The professional learning days must meet certain definitions and standards.

Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks and Developmental Indicators. In 2015, a budget proviso directed the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to convene a work group to recommend comprehensive benchmarks for developmentally appropriate interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills of SEL for grades K–12.

In 2016, OSPI designed SEL training modules for educators, administrators, and other school district staff. The module must promote students' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships, and responsible decision making.

Social Emotional Learning Micro-credential. During the 2018-19 school year, PESB is piloting a micro-credential in SEL in four educator preparation programs. A micro-credential is a credential that demonstrates skills or knowledge in a particular area. The educators' work is reviewed by a group of trained educators who determine if competency has been reached.

Summary of Bill: Work Group. PESB must convene a work group to make recommendations for standards and professional development courses on student mental health and well-being for educators and paraeducators. The work group must recommend:

- knowledge, skill, and performance standards;
- consider standards related to universal design for learning, trauma-informed practices, culturally sustaining practices, SEL, mental health literacy, and suicide prevention;
- a plan or outline for a continuing education program that meets the standards and may include certain types of courses;
- a plan for either a system of educator and paraeducator supports and incentives or conditioning recertification and renewal on completion of the continuing education program;
- a plan to align required and available professional learning to improve educator and paraeducator competency; and
- a system of supports and professional learning needed to provide building administrators the skills needed to lead and implement safe, healthy, and inclusive school climate work.

The work group must include representatives from certain specified organizations or agencies. The work group must submit a preliminary report in 2020 and final report in 2021.

Implementing the Work Group's Recommendations. Based on the work group's recommendations, PESB must:

- adopt knowledge, skill, and performance standards related to student mental health and well-being;
- require educators to meet these standards beginning July 1, 2022; and
- implement a continuing education program that meets the standards.

Beginning July 1, 2022, the state standards of practice for paraeducators must also include these standards.

Behavioral Health Online Course. PESB must collaborate with the University of Washington Bothell on the development of a series of online courses for school staff related to behavioral health. Among other things, the online courses must:

- align with the knowledge, skill, and performance standards;
- teach participants relevant laws, including laws around restraint;
- provide foundational knowledge in behavioral health, mental health, and mental illness;
- describe how to assess, intervene upon, and refer behavioral health and substance use issues; and
- teach approaches to promote health and positively influence student health behaviors.

Professional Learning Days. In either the 2019-20 or 2020-21 school year, and every four years thereafter, school districts must use one of the professional learning days to improve the effectiveness of school district staff in addressing student mental health needs and in implementing best practices in SEL.

Social Emotional Learning Micro-credential Report. By September 1, 2019, PESB must report the outcomes of the SEL micro-credential piloted in four educator preparation programs. The report must include certain elements including examining any barriers to implementing the SEL micro-credential more broadly.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Students are facing many challenges including mental health issues. More professional learning and targeted training is needed to help staff support students' mental health and well-being. This training should help staff identify when a student is in crisis and then be able to refer students to behavioral health resources in the community.

OTHER: The number of school counselors, psychologists, and school workers should be increased because they can help address mental health issues. Micro-credentials are relatively new, are expensive, and the quality varies. Teaching licenses should not be tied to specific training elements. Some of the elements of the bill seem premature and should wait until the work group develop its recommendations.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Sharon Brown, Prime Sponsor; Mona Johnson, OSPI; Ian Goodhew, University of Washington/UW Medicine.

OTHER: Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Bob Cooper, Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.