
Education Committee

SSB 5030

Brief Description: Developing comprehensive school counseling programs.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Mullet, Wellman, Conway, Darneille, Hasegawa, Kuderer, Liias, Lovelett, Nguyen, Rivers, Salomon and Wilson, C.).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires school districts, by the 2022-23 school year, to develop and implement a written plan for a comprehensive school counseling program that meets specified requirements.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop and distribute policy guidance regarding the implementation of the written plan and the associated comprehensive school counseling program.

Hearing Date:

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

School Counselors.

School counselors are professional educators and are certified by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB). School counselors must meet specific education and exam requirements, including completing a PESB-approved school counselor program.

The purpose and role of the school counselor is to plan, organize, and deliver a comprehensive school guidance and counseling program that personalizes education, and supports, promotes,

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and enhances the academic, personal, social, and career development of all students, based on the national standards for school counseling programs of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA).

The ASCA recommends that schools maintain a ratio of 250 students per school counselor, and that school counselors spend at least 80 percent of their time working directly or indirectly for students.

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In addition to its constitutional charge of supervising all matter pertaining to public schools, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and its office has numerous and broad responsibilities prescribed in statute, including:

- making rules and regulations necessary for the administration of public education requirements;
- preparing courses of study and other materials and books for the discharge of education duties;
- fulfilling financial responsibilities, including distributing legislatively allocated funds to districts for the operation of the public school system, and awarding numerous state and federally funded grants;
- maintaining and revising, in consultation with the State Board of Education, a statewide academic assessment system to measure student knowledge and skills on state learning standards and for purposes of state and federal accountability; and
- satisfying numerous reporting and other duties assigned by the Legislature.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Each school district must develop and implement a written plan (plan) for a comprehensive school counseling program (counseling program) by the beginning of the 2022-23 school year. The plan must be based on regularly updated standards developed by a national organization representing school counselors, and school district boards of directors must develop a transition plan for developing and implementing the plan.

The plan must:

- establish a counseling program that uses state and nationally recognized counselor frameworks and is aligned to state learning standards;
- provide a process for identifying student needs through a multilevel school data review and analysis that minimally includes use-of-time data, program results data, and data regarding communication with administrators, parents, students, and stakeholders;
- explain how direct and indirect services will be delivered through the counseling program; and
- establish an annual review and assessment process for the counseling program that includes building administrators and stakeholders.

The plan must be implemented by school counselors. When doing so, school counselors must

spend at least 80 percent of their work time providing direct and indirect services to benefit students, as aligned with standards developed by a national organization representing school counselors.

"Direct services" is defined as in-person interactions between school counselors and students that help students improve achievement, attendance, and discipline. Examples include instruction, appraisal, advisement, and counseling. "Indirect services" is defined as services that are provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselor's interactions with others, that allow school counselors to enhance student achievement and promote equity and access for all students. Examples of indirect services include collaboration, consultation, and referrals.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, by December 1, 2021, must develop and distribute to school districts policy guidance regarding implementation of the plan and the associated counseling program. The guidance must be developed in collaboration with a nonprofit organization that represents school directors.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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