

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 2409

Title: An act relating to character education.

Brief Description: Establishing the character education partnership program.

Sponsors: Representatives Talcott, Stensen, Carlson, Rockefeller, Quall, Santos, Haigh, O'Brien, Veloria, Keiser, D. Schmidt, Thomas, D. Sommers, McDonald, Lantz, Hurst, Skinner, Ruderman and Esser.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Meeting Date: January 17, 2000

Bill Analysis Prepared by: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background: During the 1990's the legislature adopted two laws that alluded to the role of schools in character development. In 1993, as part of the state's education reform legislation, the goal of the Basic Education Act was amended as follows:

The goal of the Basic Education Act for the schools of the state of Washington set forth in this chapter shall be to provide students with the opportunity to become responsible citizens, to contribute to their own economic well-being and to that of their families and communities, and to enjoy productive and satisfying lives. To these ends, the goals of each school district, with the involvement of parents and community members, shall be to provide opportunities for all students to develop the knowledge and skills essential to:

- (1) Read with comprehension, write with skill, and communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings;*
- (2) Know and apply the core concepts and principles of mathematics; social, physical, and life sciences; civics and history; geography; arts; and health and fitness;*
- (3) Think analytically, logically, and creatively, and to integrate experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems; and*
- (4) Understand the importance of work and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities.*

In 1994, the legislature added additional language on essential values and character traits to the Basic Education Act:

The legislature also recognizes that certain basic values and character traits are essential to individual liberty, fulfillment, and happiness. However, these values and traits are not intended to be assessed or be standards for graduation. The legislature intends that local communities have the responsibility for determining how these values and character traits

are learned as determined by consensus at the local level. These values and traits include the importance of:

- (1) Honesty, integrity, and trust;*
- (2) Respect for self and others;*
- (3) Responsibility for personal actions and commitments;*
- (4) Self-discipline and moderation;*
- (5) Diligence and a positive work ethic;*
- (6) Respect for law and authority;*
- (7) Healthy and positive behavior; and*
- (8) Family as the basis of society.*

Since the mid 1990's, three school districts, one elementary school, and the Seattle Indian Center have participated in a federal grant program that funds locally developed and supported character education programs. With funding of about \$31,000 per site per year since 1997, the five programs have each developed unique approaches to character development. The grants will expire after this year.

Summary: The legislature finds that academic success rests on a foundation of character. The legislature intends to help interested schools design and implement locally developed and supported character education programs.

The Washington Character Education Partnership program is established. The program will help public schools in their efforts to design and implement character education programs that have been developed in partnership with parents and local community members. The program will be administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Participating schools and school districts may each receive annual grants of up to \$25,000 for up to two years. Participants shall be selected by OSPI through a competitive grant process. Grant applications must be supported by the school board and district superintendent. For the duration of the grant, participants must develop and maintain community and parental partnerships in the design and implementation of their character education programs. Participants must also record and share information on the program with parents and the community. Participants must also provide a final report to the OSPI. The elements required in the final report and the OSPI program responsibilities are described.

Grants may be used for a variety of purposes. Up to \$1000 may be used for community outreach, including identification of the character traits and values the community wants the schools to reinforce. The grant may be used to determine how to take the identified traits and weave them into the curriculum and culture of the school or district. The grant may also be used for instructional materials, staff development materials, and training in conflict resolution and personal responsibility.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note:

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