

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 2409

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 24, 2000

Title: An act relating to character education.

Brief Description: Encouraging character education programs in schools.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Talcott, Stensen, Carlson, Rockefeller, Quall, Santos, Haigh, O'Brien, Veloria, Keiser, D. Schmidt, Thomas, D. Sommers, McDonald, Lantz, Hurst, Skinner, Ruderman and Esser).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/17/2000, 2/24/2000 [DP, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Benton, Brown, Finkbeiner, Goings, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen and Swecker.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Hochstatter.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Current education law includes provisions recognizing "that certain basic values and character traits are essential to individual liberty, fulfillment, and happiness." These values and traits include:

- (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.

The values and character traits listed are not to be assessed or be standards for graduation. Additionally, local communities have the responsibility for determining how the values and character traits are learned.

Summary of Bill: School districts are encouraged to implement character education programs incorporating into each school's curriculum the values and character traits

specified. When developing the programs, school districts are encouraged to consult with parents and all local interested stakeholders.

Subject to legislative appropriation, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction is to provide funds to school districts implementing character education programs.

The bill is null and void if not funded in the budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Students taught positive values and character traits can help lead to a safe environment in schools. Providing character education programs in public schools would help address current safety concerns in Washington's public schools. Schools currently receiving federal funds for character education programs have seen positive results. This bill would encourage more school districts throughout Washington to develop, through local partnership, character education programs.

Testimony Against: Character cannot be taught. Funds for character education programs would be better spent elsewhere in schools. Character education programs invite lawsuits from those disagreeing with the types of character taught.

Testified: PRO: Joe Pope, AWSP; Bob Higley, WA Evangelicals for Responsible Govt.; Mark Walter, Rogers HS, Puyallup; CON: Marda Kirkwood, Citizens United for Responsible Education.