

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5908

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 7, 2020

**Title:** An act relating to equity and cultural competency in the public school system.

**Brief Description:** Providing training for equity and cultural competency in the public school system.

**Sponsors:** Senators Das, Randall, Saldaña, Nguyen, Lias, Salomon, Conway, Darneille, Kuderer and Wilson, C.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/05/20, 2/07/20 [DPS, DNP].

**Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill**

- Incorporates equity, diversity, and inclusion professional development into existing cultural competency training for school board directors, district staff, and school staff.
- Directs school districts to focus first on these topics when there is new state funding for professional learning days beginning with the 2021-22 school year.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5908 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hunt, McCoy, Mullet, Pedersen and Salomon.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Hawkins, Ranking Member; Holy, Padden and Wagoner.

**Staff:** Ailey Kato (786-7434)

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Background:** Standards for Cultural Competence. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) adopted a set of standards for effective teaching. In developing the standards, PESB had to incorporate standards for cultural competency along the entire continuum.

Cultural competency includes knowledge of student cultural histories and contexts, as well as family norms and values in different cultures; knowledge and skills in accessing community resources and community and parent outreach; and skills in adapting instruction to students' experiences and identifying cultural contexts for individual students.

Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee. In 2009, this committee was created to synthesize the findings and recommendations from achievement gap studies and recommend policies and strategies to close the achievement gap.

Professional Development and Training. In 2016, the Legislature directed the creation of cultural competency professional development and training for different groups.

*School Board Directors.* The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA), in consultation with other entities, developed a plan for the creation and delivery of cultural competency training for school board directors and superintendents.

*School and District Staff.* The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in collaboration with other entities, developed a content outline for professional development and training in cultural competency for school staff. Educational service districts (ESDs) and school districts are encouraged to use this training.

*School Districts Identified for Improvement.* Certain districts identified for improvement are strongly encouraged to provide the cultural competency professional development and training.

Professional Learning Days. Professional learning means a comprehensive, sustained, job-embedded, and collaborative approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement. Beginning in the 2018-19 school year, the Legislature began phasing in funding for professional learning days for certificated instructional staff. At a minimum, the state is required to allocate funding for:

- one day in the 2018-19 school year;
- two days in the 2019-20 school year; and
- three days in the 2020-21 school year.

**Summary of Bill (First Substitute):** Professional Development and Training. Professional development regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion is incorporated into existing cultural competency training. WSSDA, in consultation with the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, OSPI, and PESB, must develop a recommended list of available training programs. The training programs must consider various races, ethnicities, religions, disabilities, sexualities, and genders.

*School Board Directors.* The training programs must instruct school board directors on examining school district policies with an equity lens and how to use data to identify disproportionate outcomes. Beginning in the 2021-22 school year, WSSDA must provide

ongoing training through the use of its association dues to school board members using a program from the recommended list.

*School and District Staff.* Subject to appropriations, ESDs and school districts must provide job-embedded, ongoing training opportunities for all staff, from classified staff to the superintendent, to gain knowledge and skills in these topics.

*School Districts Identified for Improvement.* The statute that strongly encourages certain districts identified for improvement to provide cultural competency professional development and training is repealed.

Professional Learning Days. Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, any new state funding for professional learning days must be prioritized by school districts to focus first on providing equity, diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence training.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (First Substitute):**

- Removes the section that creates the Center for Equity and Cultural Competency.
- Directs WSSDA, in collaboration other entities, to develop a recommended list of available equity, diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency training programs.
- Specifies that the identified training programs must consider various races, ethnicities, religions, disabilities, sexualities, and genders.
- Requires WSSDA to provide ongoing training from the recommended list through the use of its association dues beginning in the 2021-22 school year.
- Directs ESDs and school districts to use the training materials from the recommended list to provide job-embedded, ongoing training opportunities for staff and the superintendent beginning in the 2021-22 school year and subject to appropriations.
- Requires school districts to focus first on providing this training beginning in the 2021-22 school year when there is new state funding for professional learning days.

**Appropriation:** The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

**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 on Original Bill:** *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Washington classrooms are becoming increasingly more diverse, and teachers do not reflect the student population. Systemic changes need to address this reality, and training needs to be statewide and for all K-12 staff. Bias can manifest both implicitly and explicitly, which impacts actions and decisions. Bias is present when screening students for highly capable programs and special education. Recognizing this bias and being culturally aware can reduce the disproportionate impacts in schools. Cultural competence is the ability to successfully teach students who are

from a culture different than the teacher. When school staff are culturally aware and responsive, relationships with students are stronger, school climate is more positive, and academic outcomes are improved. Professional development needs to be ongoing and deeply embedded. This bill will help all students feel welcome and ready to succeed. This bill will help recruit and retain teachers of color. OSPI does not need a separate center to do this work.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Mona Das, Prime Sponsor; Glenn Jenkins, Teacher, Auburn School District; Lorrell Noahr, Washington Education Association; Clifford Traisman, Highline and Seattle Public Schools; Marissa Rathbone, Washington State School Directors' Association; Eileen Yoshina, Director of Equity in Education, Puget Sound Educational Service District; Julia Warth, League of Education Voters; Maria Flores, OSPI.

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