

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## 2SSB 6243

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### As Reported by House Committee On: Education

**Title:** An act relating to a training program for educators and parents concerning students' mental health.

**Brief Description:** Regarding a training program for educators and parents concerning students' mental health.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Litzow, Fain, McAuliffe, Dammeier, Rivers, O'Ban, Bailey, Hill, Warnick, Becker, Hewitt, Keiser, Carlyle, Darneille, Rolfes, Conway and Mullet).

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Education: 2/22/16, 2/25/16 [DPA].

#### **Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill (As Amended by Committee)**

- Requires the development of an online social and emotional training module for educators.
- Requires, subject to a specific appropriation, development of approaches to increase social and emotional learning in schools, assessment of the feasibility of developing a social and emotional learning model, and development of public-private partnerships to support the rollout of the model.
- Requires, subject to a specific appropriation, training of educational service district student support staff on responding to concerns about suicide, assessment of the feasibility of developing a school suicide prevention model, and development of public-private partnerships to support the rollout of the model.
- Requires an inventory of, and report on, the mental health service models available to students through schools, school districts, and educational service districts.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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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.*

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Ortiz-Self, Vice Chair; Reykdal, Vice Chair; Magendanz, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stambaugh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Griffey, Hayes, Kilduff, Klippert, Kuderer, McCaslin, Orwall, Pollet, Rossetti and Springer.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Hargrove and Harris.

**Staff:** Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

### **Background:**

#### Social and Emotional Learning.

In 2010 the Department of Early Learning, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and Thrive by Five Washington reviewed and revised the early learning and development benchmarks, which they published as the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines. These guidelines include information about social and emotional learning (SEL) and development for parents, teachers, and other adults who support children in grades K–3.

The 2015 operating budget (Chapter 4, Laws of 2015, 3rd sp.s [ESSB 6052]) directed the OSPI to convene a work group to recommend comprehensive benchmarks for developmentally appropriate interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills of SEL for grades kindergarten through high school (Benchmarks Report). The benchmarks must build upon what is being done in early learning. The work group is required to report on its recommendations by October 1, 2016.

#### Youth Suicide Screening.

In 2013 legislation was enacted (Chapter 197, Laws of 2013 [ESHB 1336]) that highlighted the mental health needs of students:

- School counselors, social workers, psychologists, and nurses were required to complete a training in youth suicide screening and referral, as a condition of certification.
- Each Educational Service District (ESD) was required to develop and maintain the capacity to offer training on youth suicide screening and referral and on recognition, initial screening, and response to emotional or behavioral distress in students. The training may be offered on a fee-for-service basis or at no cost if funds are available.
- School districts were required to adopt a plan for recognition, initial screening, and response to emotional or behavioral distress in students and provide the plan to all staff annually.

The University of Washington Departments of Social Work and Communication, the School of Nursing, and the College of Education collaborated to create Forefront. Forefront focuses on introducing changes to suicide prevention by:

- educating and empowering individuals and communities to advocate for and to implement suicide prevention strategies;

- training health professionals to develop and sharpen skills in the assessment, management, and treatment of suicide risk;
- supporting secondary schools and colleges implementing comprehensive plans to promote mental health services; and
- guiding news media in responsible reporting on mental health and suicide that accurately portrays the reality of hope and recovery.

#### Children's Mental Health Services.

Schools must respond to a broad range of behavioral and emotional needs that influence students' and schools' successes. Publicly funded mental health services are often available only to the neediest children, as defined by income and severity of need.

The organizational structure for the delivery of publicly funded mental health services in Washington is similar to the structure of the larger public educational system. Under contract with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Regional Support Networks (RSNs) oversee the delivery of mental health services through community-based mental health agencies, often nonprofit entities, for individuals who meet access-to-care standards. During the 2015 fiscal year, the DSHS provided mental health services to approximately 48,000 children through contracts with 11 RSNs.

Apple Health for Kids, part of the state-federal Medicaid program, provides low cost, community-based, out-patient mental health services to children in families with an income below 210 percent of the federal poverty level. Families with children above that level may also be eligible for the same coverage at a low cost.

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#### **Summary of Amended Bill:**

##### Social and Emotional Training.

The OSPI must create and maintain an online social and emotional training module for educators, administrators, and other school district staff. The training module must be based on the recommendations of the OSPI's 2016 Benchmarks Report. The module must be available by September 1, 2017.

Subject to a specific appropriation, the OSPI must contract and partner with a state organization that educates about and advocates for access to SEL and skill development in Washington public schools, in order to build capacity, promote, and sustain a SEL collaborative to support implementation of the Benchmarks Report. The purpose of this partnership is to identify, test, and develop scalable, cost-effective, and evidence-based approaches for increasing SEL in schools, and for improving student outcomes.

Subject to a specific appropriation, the partner organization selected by the OSPI must establish relationships with the ESDs to assess the feasibility of collaborating to develop a multiyear, statewide rollout of a comprehensive SEL model. The partner organization must also work to develop public-private partnerships to support the rollout of comprehensive SEL across Washington's schools.

### Youth Suicide Prevention Training.

Subject to a specific appropriation, Forefront at the University of Washington must convene a one-day in-person training of student support staff from the ESDs to deepen the staff's capacity to assist schools in their districts in responding to concerns about suicide. The ESDs must send staff members to the one-day in-person training within existing resources.

Subject to a specific appropriation, after establishing relationships with the ESDs, Forefront must continue to meet with the ESDs via videoconference on a monthly basis to answer questions that arise, and to assess the feasibility of collaborating with the ESDs to develop a multiyear, statewide rollout of a comprehensive school suicide prevention model involving regional trainings, on-site coaching, and cohorts of participating schools in each of the ESDs. The comprehensive school suicide prevention model must consist of:

- school-specific revisions to required safe school plans to include procedures for suicide prevention, intervention, assessment, referral, reentry, and intervention and recovery after a suicide attempt or death;
- developing, within the school, capacity to train staff, teachers, parents, and students in how to recognize and support a student who may be struggling with behavioral health issues;
- improved identification such as screening, and response systems such as family counseling, to support students who are at risk;
- enhanced community-based linkages of support; and
- school selection of appropriate curricula and programs to enhance student awareness of behavioral health issues to reduce stigma, and to promote resilience and coping skills.

Subject to a specific appropriation, Forefront must work to develop public-private partnerships to support the rollout of a comprehensive school suicide prevention model across Washington's middle and high schools.

Subject to a specific appropriation, by December 15, 2017, Forefront must report to the Legislature with the outcomes of the ESD trainings, any public-private partnership developments, and recommendations on ways to work with the ESDs or others to implement suicide prevention.

### Inventory of Mental Health Service Models.

School districts and the ESDs must report the following data to the OSPI:

- how many students are served by mental health services in each school, district, or an ESD;
- how many of these students are participating in Medicaid programs;
- how the mental health services are funded, including federal, state, and private sources;
- information on who provides the mental health services, including district employees and contractors; and
- any other available information related to student access and outcomes.

The OSPI must compile the data into an inventory of the mental health service models available to students through schools, school districts, and the ESDs. By October 31, 2016, the OSPI must submit a report to the Legislature. This section expires August 1, 2017.

### **Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill:**

The amended bill adds that, subject to a specific appropriation, the OSPI must contract and partner with a SEL organization to build capacity, promote, and sustain a SEL collaborative to support implementation of the Benchmarks Report, including assessing the feasibility of developing a statewide rollout of a comprehensive SEL model, and developing public-private partnerships to support the rollout.

The language relating to requiring the ESDs to work with Forefront to develop a two-day training program is replaced with language that requires, subject to a specific appropriation, Forefront to convene one-day, in-person trainings of ESD student support staff on responding to concerns about suicide. The ESDs must send staff to these trainings within existing resources.

There is a requirement, subject to a specific appropriation, that Forefront assess the feasibility of developing a comprehensive school suicide prevention model, and develop public-private partnerships to support the rollout. In addition, subject to an appropriation, Forefront must report to the Legislature on the outcomes of the ESD trainings, any public-private partnership developments, and recommendations on ways to work with the ESDs or others to implement suicide prevention.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available. New fiscal note requested on February 25, 2016.

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

### **Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The ESDs were created in 1969 to ensure equity and consistent outcomes across the state. For a long time they have focused on academic outcomes, but they should also focus on social and emotional health and safety for young people. The second leading cause of death among young people in Washington is suicide. One in five young people have contemplated suicide by the tenth grade, about 15 percent have a plan to commit suicide, and a little over 13 percent have attempted to implement a plan by age 10. In some communities the data is even more shocking. Where there is significant duress in the home and there is trauma in the community, one in five students have actually attempted suicide by middle school. This is a significant concern. The ESDs want to create a system to provide training and support staff on early identification and intervention. The stresses on students can often contribute to their negative image of themselves and a lack of hope.

The ESDs want to have adequate resources to support this work. There should be regional investment for regional coordinators of SEL. Some people are supportive of the bill, but concerned that it requires the ESDs to develop the training within existing resources.

It would be great if the SEL language from the House bill was in this bill. The ESDs are ideally situated to help school districts. The ESDs have connections to county departments of health and social services. The ESDs do suicide prevention and intervention, and can sometimes be a licensed treatment agency for behavioral health, dependency, and mental health treatment. Staff members are funded through contracts with counties, grants, federal funds, and the state division of behavioral health. However, the ESDs are not given funds directly from the state to give behavioral health or other social and emotional support services to students in schools. There is lots of research that says that, in order for students to be able to achieve the high standards set by the state, the students need to access the prefrontal cortex of their brains. Without SEL supports, students have unmet social and emotional needs.

Schools have to update their safety plans to address emotional distress and suicide intervention, postvention, and recovery. Many schools are struggling with this. There are organizations that can help ESDs create training programs to train school staff on these subjects. Forefront at the University of Washington has hosted a five-day training of ESD staff. The ESD staff then train school district staff and families over a two-day period. In the training, the individuals practice how they would intervene with a student in a delicate situation. One important part of the model is that teachers train teachers, parents train parents, and peers train peers. It is important for monthly technical assistance to be provided on site. There needs to be support to the schools so that staff can be sent to the trainings.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The issue with the bill is that it requires the ESDs to develop the training on suicide prevention within existing resources. The training program is helpful, especially bringing those who were trained back to the building level to train additional staff on what they learned. The training programs are about 70 minutes.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Dana Anderson and Mike Hickman, Education Service District 113; and Matthew Taylor, Forefront: Innovations in Suicide Prevention.

(Other) Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.