

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2816

As Passed House:
February 18, 2020

Title: An act relating to nurturing positive social and emotional school and classroom climates.

Brief Description: Nurturing positive social and emotional school and classroom climates.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Corry, Steele, Caldier, Van Werven, Eslick, Chambers and Boehnke).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/27/20, 2/6/20 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/18/20, 95-2.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Directs the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) to develop, and periodically update, a model policy and procedure for nurturing a positive social and emotional school and classroom climate that meets specified requirements and to post the policy to its website by March 1, 2021.
- Requires that school districts adopt, and periodically review, a policy and procedure for promoting a positive school and classroom climate consistent with the WSSDA model policy.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Paul, Vice Chair; Steele, Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Volz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Callan, Corry, Harris, Ortiz-Self, Rude, Stonier, Thai, Valdez and Ybarra.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

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.

Social Emotional Learning. State law provides that social emotional learning (SEL) will help students build awareness and skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing relationships, and making responsible decisions that support success in school and life. Legislation adopted in 2019 (i.e. Second Substitute Senate Bill 5082, enacted as Chapter 386 Laws of 2019) directed the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) to complete a number of activities related to SEL, for example: the OSPI must adopt SEL standards and benchmarks for students; the PESB must incorporate those SEL standards and benchmarks into principal, teacher, and paraeducator standards; and a SEL Committee must produce an annual report with accomplishments, state-level data, identification of systemic barriers or policy changes necessary to promote and expand SEL, and recommendations.

Teacher and Principal Evaluations. Classroom teacher and principal evaluations are based on specified statutory criteria. One of the criteria for teacher evaluations is fostering and managing a safe, positive learning environment. One of the criteria for principal evaluations is creating a school culture that promotes the ongoing improvement of learning and teaching for students and staff, and another is providing for school safety.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) must develop a model policy and procedure for nurturing a positive social and emotional school and classroom climate. The goal of the policy and procedure is to support and promote school and school district action plans that create, maintain, and nurture physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe, respectful, and positive school and classroom environments that foster equitable, ethical, social, emotional, and academic education for all students. The WSSDA must update the model policy and procedure periodically to align with the work of the SEL Committee.

The model policy and procedure must: (a) recognize that there is not one best way to create, maintain, and nurture a positive social and emotional school and classroom climate and consider each school's history, strengths, needs, and goals; (b) define and describe the essential elements of a positive social and emotional school and classroom climate, which must align with the SEL benchmarks and standards; (c) recognize the important role that students' families play in collaborating with the school and school district in creating, maintaining, and nurturing a positive social and emotional school and classroom climate; and (d) describe a framework for an effective and informed positive social and emotional school and classroom climate improvement process that includes a continuous cycle of planning and preparation, evaluation, action planning, and implementation.

In developing the model policy and procedure, the WSSDA must: (a) consult with staff at the OSPI and organizations with expertise in social and emotional health, and in equity, race, and inclusive learning environments; (b) work with the SEL Committee to align the climate improvement framework with the statewide framework for SEL; (c) consider the relationship between the model policy and procedure and policies related to student behaviors and student discipline; and (d) review research on, and examples of effective implementation of, restorative practices, collaborative and proactive practices, trauma-sensitive and trauma-informed practices, classroom management, and other topics related to the goal of the policy.

The model policy and procedure must be posted publicly on the WSSDA website by March 1, 2021. Updates must be posted publicly within a reasonable time of development.

School districts must adopt a policy and procedure for promoting a positive school and classroom climate consistent with the WSSDA model policy by the beginning of the 2021-22 school year, and districts must periodically review their policies and procedures for consistency with updated versions of the model policy.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) A safe supportive school climate is the foundation of everything schools do. A student who is frightened or anxious in the school environment is not able to learn. It does not matter what curriculum is used or how qualified teachers are if a positive school climate does not make students available for learning. In order to create a classroom environment that students are comfortable in, there needs to be people in the school that care about the students, spend time with them, and work with them on life skills.

Some students have extreme trauma, come from extreme poverty, and may experience marginalization. Teachers can create a proficient and optimal climate for teaching, especially by working together collaboratively. This state should become the first to change the paradigm, so that children are honored, dignified and provided the education they deserve. This bill will save lives.

Children should not be moved out of the regular classroom without parent notification and involvement. Many educators do not understand the effects of processing disorders on student behaviors, including anxiety and depression. It is not possible to discipline a child with a processing disorder into making correct decisions. There is a generational story of bias due to labeling children. Students are discriminated and harassed using the methodology of classroom management and discipline practices.

The model policy described in this bill should engage students, families, and communities in the development of the policy and procedure. The model should be social and accessible.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Corry, prime sponsor; Katrina Bretsch, People for People; Gabrielle Gilbert; and Charlotte Cassidy, Attorneys for Educational Rights.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Sharon Hanek; Marissa Rathbone, Washington State School Directors' Association; Dawn Land; and Dave Mastin, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.