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**HOUSE BILL 2239**

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**State of Washington**

**68th Legislature**

**2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Timmons, Eslick, Callan, Ramel, Reeves, Reed, Doglio, Leavitt, and Davis

Read first time 01/09/24. Referred to Committee on Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to supporting student well-being through  
2 instruction in social-emotional skills; amending RCW 28A.300.288;  
3 adding a new section to chapter 28A.320 RCW; adding a new section to  
4 chapter 28A.630 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an  
5 expiration date.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature recognizes that there  
8 is an ongoing youth mental health crisis that requires a thoughtful  
9 and effective response strategy. The rates of psychological distress  
10 among young people have increased since the COVID-19 pandemic began.  
11 Psychological distress can manifest as depression or anxiety,  
12 impulsiveness or irritability, substance abuse, as well as suicidal  
13 ideations and suicide attempts. Furthermore, a national survey  
14 conducted by the centers for disease control and prevention in 2021  
15 found that high school students who said they felt close and  
16 connected to people at school less frequently reported negative  
17 impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their mental wellness.

18 (2) The legislature finds that teaching students how to build the  
19 skills to cope with stress, navigate their emotions, build healthy  
20 relationships, and develop problem solving skills helps to reduce  
21 harmful student behaviors and improve student well-being.

1 (3) The legislature acknowledges that the office of the  
2 superintendent of public instruction defines social-emotional  
3 learning as the process through which individuals build awareness and  
4 skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing  
5 relationships, and making responsible decisions that support success  
6 in school and in life. As directed by the legislature, the office of  
7 the superintendent of public instruction adopted social-emotional  
8 learning standards and benchmarks in 2020, but the use of these  
9 standards and benchmarks is required only in grades kindergarten  
10 through three.

11 (4) The legislature finds that numerous public schools in  
12 Washington are teaching students skills that promote social,  
13 emotional, behavioral, and mental health and wellness within a  
14 prevention-based framework and within a continuum of support, but  
15 that many schools do not have the capacity or resources to  
16 proactively provide similar student supports.

17 (5) Therefore, the legislature intends to encourage all public  
18 schools to provide instruction on skills that promote social,  
19 emotional, behavioral, and mental health and wellness inclusive of  
20 self-awareness, self-management, self-efficacy, social awareness,  
21 social management, and social engagement consistent with the adopted  
22 learning standards and benchmarks. The legislature also intends to  
23 assist public schools in supporting student well-being through the  
24 development of social-emotional skills by distributing funding to the  
25 public schools through determinations of financial need.

26 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.320  
27 RCW to read as follows:

28 (1) Every school district and public school is encouraged to  
29 provide instruction on skills that promote social, emotional,  
30 behavioral, and mental health and wellness inclusive of self-  
31 awareness, self-management, self-efficacy, social awareness, social  
32 management, and social engagement consistent with learning standards  
33 and benchmarks adopted by the office of the superintendent of public  
34 instruction pursuant to RCW 28A.300.478. It is recommended that any  
35 curriculum used to provide instruction in accordance with this  
36 section is research-based or evidence-based, developmentally  
37 appropriate, linguistically responsive, and culturally sustaining,  
38 incorporates elements of universal design, and promotes and supports  
39 student learning, mental health, and well-being.

1 (2) School districts and public schools are encouraged to  
2 coordinate actions to implement this section with related efforts,  
3 such as planning for emotional or behavioral distress in students  
4 under RCW 28A.320.127, priorities of school counselors, social  
5 workers, and psychologists under RCW 28A.320.280, implementing a  
6 comprehensive school counseling program under RCW 28A.320.600, and  
7 providing staff training under RCW 28A.415.445.

8 (3) For the purpose of this section, "public school" has the same  
9 meaning as in RCW 28A.150.010.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.630  
11 RCW to read as follows:

12 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this  
13 specific purpose, between July, 1, 2024, and June 30, 2029, the  
14 office of the superintendent of public instruction shall annually  
15 distribute funding to school districts, charter schools, and state-  
16 tribal education compact schools for the purpose of supporting  
17 instruction in social-emotional learning that is consistent with the  
18 learning standards and benchmarks adopted by the office of the  
19 superintendent of public instruction under RCW 28A.300.478. The  
20 process for distributing funding must be streamlined for the  
21 effective delivery of resources to rural and small school districts.

22 (2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must  
23 prioritize funding distributed under this section first to the  
24 highest poverty school districts, charter schools, and state-tribal  
25 education compact schools that are not providing instruction  
26 consistent with the social-emotional learning standards and  
27 benchmarks, and second to school districts, charter schools, and  
28 state-tribal education compact schools in communities identified as  
29 highest risk under RCW 28A.300.288 and that provide instruction in  
30 social-emotional learning as a component of primary prevention for  
31 youth suicide prevention activities.

32 (3) Recipients of the funding under this section must comply with  
33 the recommendations under section 2 of this act, including the  
34 social-emotional learning curriculum recommendations.

35 (4) As required by the office of the superintendent of public  
36 instruction, recipients of the funding under this section must report  
37 to the office of the superintendent of public instruction with their  
38 perspectives on any student outcomes that were impacted by increasing

1 the instruction in social-emotional learning using the learning  
2 standards and benchmarks adopted under RCW 28A.300.478.

3 (5) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must  
4 work with state and community partners to implement this section.

5 (6) By October 15, 2029, and in accordance with RCW 43.01.036,  
6 the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall submit  
7 to the appropriate committees of the legislature a report indicating  
8 the recipients of the funding, what each recipient used the funding  
9 for, and perspectives on impacted student outcomes.

10 (7) This section expires July 1, 2030.

11 **Sec. 4.** RCW 28A.300.288 and 2014 c 103 s 2 are each amended to  
12 read as follows:

13 (1) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall  
14 work with state agency and community partners, including prevention  
15 experts in the division of behavioral health and recovery of the  
16 state health care authority, to assist schools in implementing youth  
17 suicide prevention activities, which may include the following:

18 (a) Training for school employees, parents, community members,  
19 and students in recognizing and responding to the signs of suicide;

20 (b) Partnering with local coalitions of community members  
21 interested in preventing youth suicide; and

22 (c) Responding to communities determined to be in crisis after a  
23 suicide or attempted suicide to prevent further instances of suicide.

24 (2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction,  
25 working with state and community partners, shall prioritize funding  
26 appropriated for subsection (1) of this section to communities  
27 identified as the highest risk.

28 (3) The office of the superintendent of public instruction is  
29 encouraged to work with state agency and community partners to  
30 promote funding opportunities available under this section to  
31 eligible schools.

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