
SENATE BILL 5777

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2019 Regular Session

By Senators Brown, Darneille, and Walsh

1 AN ACT Relating to building capacity within the educator
2 workforce to improve student mental health and well-being; amending
3 RCW 28A.413.050; adding a new section to chapter 28A.630 RCW; adding
4 a new section to chapter 28A.410 RCW; adding new sections to chapter
5 28A.415 RCW; creating new sections; providing an effective date; and
6 providing an expiration date.

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

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature acknowledges:

9 (1) The mental health and well-being of students in Washington
10 schools is of utmost importance to improve academic learning, social-
11 emotional learning, school safety, and success in school and life.
12 Building a safe and supportive school climate where students feel a
13 deep sense of belonging takes intentional, coordinated work by
14 educators demonstrating shared knowledge and skills.

15 (2) School districts have come to depend on educators and other
16 school staff to be on the front lines of behavioral and mental health
17 services for students. However, educators in Washington's public
18 schools bring varying skills and expertise. In some situations,
19 educators are expected to provide services for which they are not
20 trained or qualified. In other situations, their knowledge, skills,
21 and commitment are underutilized.

1 (3) Professional learning for educators and other school staff to
2 address mental health and well-being of students is widely variable
3 across the state and is without specific standards or a consistent
4 approach. The need for robust training and educator demonstration of
5 competency in these areas is critical to address the mental health
6 and well-being of students in the classroom. The educator workforce
7 must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to build competency
8 and be responsive to the changing needs of students in Washington
9 schools.

10 (4) Professional learning through microcredentials focused both
11 on training and demonstration of skills in the classroom is intended
12 to ensure educators are prepared to address student mental health and
13 social and emotional needs. Microcredentials are standards-based and
14 require educators to demonstrate evidence of meeting specific
15 knowledge, skills, and competencies. In addition, professional
16 learning through an online mental health first aid program would
17 introduce classified staff to these issues and help prepare all staff
18 to address students' behavioral and mental health needs.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.630
20 RCW to read as follows:

21 (1) The professional educator standards board must convene a work
22 group to make recommendations for standards and professional
23 development courses on student mental health and well-being.

24 (2) The work group must recommend:

25 (a) Knowledge, skill, and performance standards related to
26 student mental health and well-being, after identifying redundancies
27 and gaps in current educator or paraeducator standards that include
28 student mental health or student well-being. The work group must
29 consider standards related to universal design for learning, trauma-
30 informed practices, culturally sustaining practices, social-emotional
31 learning, mental health literacy, and suicide prevention. The
32 standards must be designed for educators prepared and certified as
33 authorized by the professional educator standards board under chapter
34 28A.410 RCW and for paraeducators completing certificates authorized
35 under chapter 28A.413 RCW;

36 (b) A plan or outline for a continuing education program that
37 meets the student mental health and well-being standards recommended
38 under (a) of this subsection. The program may include one or a series
39 of courses that lead to one or more microcredentials. The program may

1 include the courses developed in collaboration with University of
2 Washington Bothell under section 3 of this act. The continuing
3 education program must be appropriate for educators and paraeducators
4 and may include courses differentiated by staff type;

5 (c) A plan for either: (i) A system of educator and paraeducator
6 supports and incentives, such as professional designations, teacher
7 leadership opportunities, and stipends, designed to promote use of
8 the continuing education program recommended under (b) of this
9 subsection; or (ii) conditioning educator recertification and
10 paraeducator certificate renewal on completion of the continuing
11 education program recommended under (b) of this subsection;

12 (d) A plan to align required and available professional learning
13 to improve educator and paraeducator competency in supporting student
14 mental health and well-being; and

15 (e) A system of supports and professional learning needed to
16 provide building administrators the skills needed to lead and
17 implement safe, healthy, and inclusive school climate work.

18 (3) The members of the work group must include representatives of
19 the following organizations or agencies:

20 (a) The professional educator standards board;

21 (b) The paraeducator board;

22 (c) Educational service districts;

23 (d) Colleges of education;

24 (e) State teacher, paraeducator, school counselor, school social
25 worker, principal, and administrator associations;

26 (f) A career and technical education organization;

27 (g) A special education advocacy organization;

28 (h) A community-based organization representing immigrant and
29 refugee communities;

30 (i) A community-based organization representing communities of
31 color;

32 (j) A community-based organization providing mental health
33 services in schools;

34 (k) A community-based organization focused on social-emotional
35 learning;

36 (l) The educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability
37 committee;

38 (m) The office of the superintendent of public instruction,
39 including experts on a curriculum related to compassion, resilience,
40 and academic success;

1 (n) The department of children, youth, and families;

2 (o) The University of Washington's school mental health
3 assessment, research, and training center;

4 (p) An organization of mental health experts; and

5 (q) An organization representing parents of students enrolled in
6 the public school system.

7 (4) (a) By January 10, 2020, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036,
8 the work group shall submit a preliminary report to the education
9 committees of the legislature that describes its activities over the
10 prior year and makes recommendations for the adoption of knowledge,
11 skill, and performance standards related to student mental health and
12 well-being.

13 (b) By January 10, 2021, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036,
14 the work group shall submit a final report to the education
15 committees of the legislature that describes its activities over the
16 course of the prior year and makes recommendations on the topics
17 listed in subsection (2) (b) through (e) of this section.

18 (5) This section expires August 1, 2021.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.410
20 RCW to read as follows:

21 Based on the recommendations of the work group convened under
22 section 2 of this act, the professional educator standards board
23 must:

24 (1) Adopt knowledge, skill, and performance standards related to
25 student mental health and well-being;

26 (2) Beginning July 1, 2022, require that educators prepared and
27 certified under this chapter meet the knowledge, skill, and
28 performance standards related to student mental health and well-
29 being; and

30 (3) Implement a continuing education program that meets the
31 knowledge, skill, and performance standards related to student mental
32 health and well-being.

33 **Sec. 4.** RCW 28A.413.050 and 2017 c 237 s 6 are each amended to
34 read as follows:

35 (1) The board shall adopt state standards of practice for
36 paraeducators that are based on the recommendations of the
37 paraeducator work group established in chapter 136, Laws of 2014.
38 These standards must include:

- 1 ~~((1))~~ (a) Supporting instructional opportunities;
2 ~~((2))~~ (b) Demonstrating professionalism and ethical practices;
3 ~~((3))~~ (c) Supporting a positive and safe learning environment;
4 ~~((4))~~ (d) Communicating effectively and participating in the
5 team process; and
6 ~~((5))~~ (e) Demonstrating cultural competency aligned with
7 standards developed by the professional educator standards board
8 under RCW 28A.410.270.

9 (2) Beginning July 1, 2022, the state standards of practice for
10 paraeducators must include knowledge, skill, and performance
11 standards related to student mental health and well-being that are
12 based on the recommendations of the work group convened under section
13 2 of this act.

14 NEW SECTION. Sec. 5. A new section is added to chapter 28A.415
15 RCW to read as follows:

16 The professional educator standards board must collaborate with
17 the University of Washington Bothell on the development of a series
18 of online courses for school staff related to behavioral health. The
19 standards for the online courses must be consistent with the
20 knowledge, skill, and performance standards related to student mental
21 health and well-being recommended by the work group convened under
22 section 2 of this act. Among other things, the online courses must:
23 Teach participants relevant laws, including laws around restraint;
24 provide foundational knowledge in behavioral health, mental health,
25 and mental illness; describe how to assess, intervene upon, and refer
26 behavioral health and substance use issues; and teach approaches to
27 promote health and positively influence student health behaviors.

28 NEW SECTION. Sec. 6. A new section is added to chapter 28A.415
29 RCW to read as follows:

30 In either the 2019-20 or 2020-21 school year, and every four
31 years thereafter, school districts must use one of the professional
32 learning days funded under RCW 28A.150.415 to improve the
33 effectiveness of school district staff in addressing student mental
34 health needs and in implementing best practices in social-emotional
35 learning.

36 NEW SECTION. Sec. 7. By September 1, 2019, and in compliance
37 with RCW 43.01.036, the professional educator standards board must

1 report to the appropriate committees of the legislature with the
2 outcomes of the social-emotional learning microcredential piloted in
3 four educator preparation programs in the 2018-19 school year. The
4 report must describe the content of and standards for the program,
5 include the number of program participants and the number who earned
6 a microcredential, and summarize any feedback received from program
7 participants and preparation programs implementing the program. The
8 report must also examine any barriers to implementing the social-
9 emotional learning microcredential more broadly.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** Sections 3 and 4 of this act take effect
11 July 1, 2021.

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