

Representative Grier Hopkins



ALASKA STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sponsor Statement for HB 136

An Act relating to public school funding for social and emotional learning; and providing for an effective date

House Bill 136 directs the Alaska State Board of Education to create standards for school districts to utilize social and emotional learning concepts in their everyday curriculum. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is defined as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

SEL programs across Alaska are integrated into school's curricula, staff, cultures and norms or explicitly taught outside of academic learning time. HB 136 provides recognition of the value of these programs and seeks to have the Alaska State Board of Education establish standards for such programs.

By teaching students the "soft skills", SEL shows outcomes far into adulthood, reducing the life risks for impoverished and at-risk students, and overcoming Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). SEL skills are acknowledged as the best indicators for a student's future success.

Many of Alaska's school districts already understand the importance of teaching SEL within their current curriculum, and have established effective SEL programs that are locally relevant to the community and provide needed support to students and by extension their families. Recognizing this fact and that a statewide standard of practice is in the best interests of students and educators, this legislation not only establishes criteria for these programs, while allowing districts to implement the standards according to local needs and community standards.

HB 136 will help Alaska's schools provide the skills that are proven to put our students on the best path to lifelong success.

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