

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center

S.B. 123  
By: Johnson  
Education  
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As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which students acquire and apply knowledge and skills to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. The components of SEL are not currently included in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and are not widely integrated into curriculum statewide.

Research demonstrates that the benefits of SEL in schools are myriad. Academically, universal SEL programs have shown an 11-percentile gain in overall academic performance in students and an increase in high school graduation rates by six percent.

Economically, six evidence-based SEL programs have shown an average 11-to-1 return on investment and economists, employers, and corporate leaders are increasingly acknowledging that SEL is crucial for students to succeed in today's information and service economy.

In terms of mental health, SEL programs have been shown to reduce levels of emotional distress, such as depression, anxiety, and stress, making it particularly effective in addressing the mental health crisis during COVID-19. Furthermore, SEL affirms diverse cultures and backgrounds and can be used to advance educational equity.

S.B. 123 will help students achieve their full potential by amending Education Code Section 29.906 to incorporate social and emotional learning competencies into an existing character traits instruction program in TEKS for kindergarten through 12th grade. The competencies include self-management skills, interpersonal skills, social awareness, responsible decision-making skills, and self-awareness.

Supporters include Dallas ISD, Coppell ISD, Big Thought, TxPOST, and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). No opposition is anticipated.

As proposed, S.B. 123 amends current law relating to the inclusion of social and emotional skills in character trait instruction provided by public schools.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Sections 29.906(a) and (b), Education Code, as follows:

- (a) Requires the State Board of Education (SBOE) to integrate positive character traits, including social and emotional skills, into the essential knowledge and skills adopted for kindergarten through grade 12, as appropriate.

(b) Requires SBOE to include, in the list of positive character traits and skills, self-management skills, interpersonal skills, social awareness, responsible decision-making skills, and self-awareness. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 2. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2021.