

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center

S.B. 123  
By: Johnson  
Education  
5/28/2021  
Enrolled

### **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.

(Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

S.B. 123 amends current law relating to instruction in positive character traits and personal skills in 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 the heading to Section 29.906, Education Code, to read as follows:

Sec. 29.906. CHARACTER TRAITS AND PERSONAL SKILLS INSTRUCTION.

SECTION 2. Amends Sections 29.906(a), (b), and (c), Education Code, as follows:

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

(b) Requires SBOE to include certain positive character traits and personal skills, including self-management skills, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making skills. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

(c) Requires each school district and open-enrollment charter school to adopt a character education program that includes the positive character traits and personal skills, rather than the positive character traits, listed in Subsection (b).

SECTION 3. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2022-2023 school year.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2021.