



***WSPTA believes that by bolstering the crucial role of social emotional learning and trauma informed practices in education, we could help students do better in school, and lead more successful and fulfilling lives. Currently, far too many students in Washington state are failing to meet their potential to succeed in school and in life. Without strong social and emotional supports, students are at risk of bullying, maladjustment, trauma, depression, interpersonal violence, suicide, substance abuse, truancy, and dropout.***

### Background

- An average of two youth between the ages of 10 and 24 die by suicide each week in Washington state. 40% of youth who attempt suicide, make a first attempt in elementary or middle school.<sup>1</sup>
- 2016 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey results<sup>2</sup>:
  - ◊ 28-37% of youth (8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> grades) felt so sad and hopeless for two or more weeks in a row that they stopped their usual activities.
  - ◊ 17-27% (6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> grades) had been bullied in the past 30 days.
  - ◊ 8-21% (8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> grades) attempted, considered attempting, or made a plan for suicide.
  - ◊ 10-17% (6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> grades) report not feeling safe at school.
  - ◊ 22-33% (8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> grades) report being anxious, nervous or on edge in the past two weeks.
- Trauma is common in children's lives and is the second-highest predictor of academic failure.<sup>3</sup>

### Why is it helpful to teach social emotional learning, and using trauma informed practices in schools?

- Reduces barriers to learning such as stress and anxiety<sup>4</sup>
- Supports a positive school climate, which allows students to feel safe, be engaged and be respected.<sup>4</sup>
- Social emotional learning supports academics<sup>4</sup>:
  - ◊ 11% improvement in achievement test scores
  - ◊ 9% decrease in conduct problems, such as classroom misbehavior and aggression
  - ◊ 10% decrease in emotional distress, such as anxiety and depression
  - ◊ 9% improvement in attitudes about self, others, and school
  - ◊ 9% improvement in classroom behavior

### Proposed Solutions

The Washington State PTA supports legislation or policies that:

1. Integrate social emotional learning and trauma informed practices in the education system, teacher and principal preparation programs and professional learning.
2. Ensure adequate staffing of psychologists, counselors, social workers, behavioral specialists and nurses in schools.
3. Prioritize school climate.

### For More Information

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## Citations

1. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/child-safety-and-protection/youth-suicide>
2. Washington State Healthy Youth Survey 2016. <http://www.askhys.net/Docs/HYS%202016%20Analytic%20Report%20Final%2010-24-17.pdf>
3. <https://acestoohigh.com/2012/02/28/spokane-wa-students-child-trauma-prompts-search-for-prevention/>
4. Durlak, Joseph A., Weissberg, Roger P., Dymnicki, Allison B., Taylor, Rebecca D., and Schellinger, Kriston B. (2011). The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions. *Child Development* 82(1): 405-432. Retrieved from <http://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/meta-analysis-child-development-1.pdf>

*\*For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website ([www.wastatepta.org](http://www.wastatepta.org))*