
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair
2015 - 2016 Regular

Bill No: ACR 144
Author: Mullin
Version: February 24, 2016
Urgency: No
Consultant: Olgalilia Ramirez
Hearing Date: June 8, 2016
Fiscal: Yes

Subject: Public schools: character education

SUMMARY

This measure urges the State Board of Education, county offices of education, and local school governing bodies to increase emphasis on character, citizenship, ethics, and the humane treatment of living creatures in order to promote a humane and compassionate society.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Requires that each teacher endeavor to impress upon the minds of the students the principles of morality, truth, justice, patriotism, and a true comprehension of the rights, duties, and dignity of American citizenship, and the meaning of equality and human dignity, including the promotion of harmonious relations, kindness toward domestic pets and the humane treatment of living creatures, to teach them to avoid idleness, profanity, and falsehood, and to instruct them in manners and morals and the principles of a free government.
(Education Code § 233.5)
- 2) Encourages each teacher to create and foster an environment that encourages students to realize their full potential and that is free from discriminatory attitudes, practices, events, or activities, in order to prevent acts of hate violence.
(EC § 233.5)

ANALYSIS

This measure urges the State Board of Education, county offices of education, and local school governing bodies to increase emphasis on character, citizenship, ethics, and the humane treatment of living creatures in order to promote a humane and compassionate society. Specifically this measure:

- 1) Makes findings as to the legislative interest in and history of character education and the importance of character education to our society and economy, and the links between character, good citizenship, ethics, good leadership, academic achievement and school climate.

- 2) Resolves that the legislature urges the State Board of Education (SBE), county offices of education, and local school governing bodies to increase emphasis on character, citizenship, ethics, and the humane treatment of living creatures in order to promote a humane and compassionate society.
- 3) Resolves that the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the SBE, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, boards of education and administrators of county offices and school districts and to the author for distribution.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for this measure.*** According to the author, character education programs in schools have a positive effect on children. Character education programs in schools help promote common values and behaviors, such as respect, responsibility, justice, leadership, and teamwork. The author emphasizes, character education programs that incorporate the humane treatment of animals into their education curriculum also encourage good character, citizenships, and ethics.

This measure promotes the importance of character education in public schools.

- 2) ***Character education in public schools.*** Current law requires each teacher to impress upon pupils the principals of morality, truth, justice, patriotism, and a comprehension of the rights, duties and dignity of American citizenship and human dignity, including the promotion of harmonious relations, kindness toward domestic pets and the humane treatment of living creatures. The California Department of Education provides various resources for incorporating character education into a standards-based educational system and further encourages schools to recognize October as Character Education Month.
- 3) ***Related and prior legislation.***

HR 28 (Dababneh, 2016) encourages the Superintendent of Public Instruction to ensure the incorporation of humane education in the core curriculum, and resolves that compliance with existing law regarding humane education should include educating students on principles of kindness and respect for animals. This measure was adopted by the Assembly.

ACR 55 (Mullin, Chapter 145, Statutes of 2008) almost identical to this resolution, encouraged the SBE, county offices of education, and local school governing bodies to evaluate and increase their emphasis on character, citizenship, and ethics education.

SB 811 (O'Connell 2002) would have required that the promotion of compassion and respect for both humans and animals be considered in the next cycle in which the science, and history/social science curricula frameworks and the accompanying instructional materials are adopted. This measure was held in the Assembly.

AB 2028 (Correa, 2000) required the State Board of Education (SBE) to survey and report findings on character education programs implemented by school districts and county offices by January 1, 2002. AB 2028 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SUPPORT

City of Palo Alto
Palo Alto Humane Society

OPPOSITION

None received.

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