

House Study Bill 586 - Introduced

HOUSE FILE _____
BY (PROPOSED COMMITTEE
ON EDUCATION BILL BY
CHAIRPERSON WHEELER)

A BILL FOR

1 An Act requiring school districts and charter schools to
2 provide instruction related to character development to
3 students enrolled in kindergarten through grade twelve.
4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. Section 256.11, subsections 2, 3, and 4, Code
2 2024, are amended to read as follows:

3 2. a. The kindergarten program shall include experiences
4 designed to develop character and healthy emotional and social
5 habits and growth in the language arts and communication
6 skills, as well as a capacity for the completion of individual
7 tasks, and protect and increase physical well-being with
8 attention given to experiences relating to the development of
9 life skills and, subject to [section 279.80](#), age-appropriate and
10 research-based human growth and development. A kindergarten
11 teacher shall be licensed to teach in kindergarten. An
12 accredited nonpublic school must meet the requirements of this
13 subsection only if the nonpublic school offers a kindergarten
14 program; provided, however, that [section 279.80](#) shall not apply
15 to a nonpublic school.

16 b. (1) The experiences designed to develop character shall
17 include instruction in accountability, altruism, ambition,
18 charity, cheerfulness, cleanliness, compassion, conscience,
19 courage, courtesy, curiosity, dignity, diligence, duty, faith,
20 familial devotion, forbearance, friendliness, gratitude,
21 hardiness, helpfulness, honesty, honor, impartiality,
22 independent judgment, initiative, industry, integrity,
23 justice, kindness, loyalty, moderation, obedience, patience,
24 perseverance, propriety, prudence, punctuality, reliability,
25 responsibility, reverence, self-control, self-reliance,
26 temperance, thrift, tolerance, and trustworthiness.

27 (2) The experiences designed to develop character shall
28 not define or teach character traits in any manner that might
29 promote or encourage students to participate in conduct that
30 would violate any federal, state, or local law.

31 (3) Any assessment of a student's understanding of
32 development of character shall be limited to and must reflect
33 the material taught in the classroom.

34 (4) Any assessment administered pursuant to this paragraph
35 shall not evaluate whether a student evidences a specific

1 character trait in the student's life.

2 c. The requirement to provide experiences designed to
3 develop character shall not apply to a nonpublic school.

4 3. a. The following areas shall be taught in grades
5 one through six: English-language arts, social studies,
6 mathematics, science, health, physical education, traffic
7 safety, music, visual art, character development, and,
8 subject to [section 279.80](#), age-appropriate and research-based
9 human growth and development. Computer science instruction
10 incorporating the standards established under section 256.7,
11 subsection 26, paragraph "a", subparagraph (4), shall be
12 offered in at least one grade level commencing with the school
13 year beginning July 1, 2023. The health curriculum shall
14 include the characteristics of communicable diseases. The
15 state board as part of accreditation standards shall adopt
16 curriculum definitions for implementing the elementary program.

17 b. (1) The character development curriculum shall include
18 instruction in accountability, altruism, ambition, charity,
19 cheerfulness, cleanliness, compassion, conscience, courage,
20 courtesy, curiosity, dignity, diligence, duty, faith, familial
21 devotion, forbearance, friendliness, gratitude, hardiness,
22 helpfulness, honesty, honor, impartiality, independent
23 judgment, initiative, industry, integrity, justice, kindness,
24 loyalty, moderation, obedience, patience, perseverance,
25 propriety, prudence, punctuality, reliability, responsibility,
26 reverence, self-control, self-reliance, temperance, thrift,
27 tolerance, and trustworthiness.

28 (2) The character development curriculum shall not define
29 or teach character traits in any manner that might promote or
30 encourage students to participate in conduct that would violate
31 any federal, state, or local law.

32 (3) Any assessment of a student's understanding of
33 character development shall be limited to and must reflect the
34 material taught in the classroom.

35 (4) Any assessment administered pursuant to this paragraph

1 shall not evaluate whether a student evidences a specific
2 character trait in the student's life.

3 c. The requirement to provide a character development
4 curriculum shall not apply to a nonpublic school.

5 4. a. The following shall be taught in grades seven and
6 eight: English-language arts; social studies; mathematics;
7 science; health; age-appropriate and research-based human
8 growth and development; career exploration and development;
9 physical education; music; character development; and visual
10 art. Computer science instruction incorporating the standards
11 established under [section 256.7, subsection 26](#), paragraph "a",
12 subparagraph (4), shall be offered in at least one grade level
13 commencing with the school year beginning July 1, 2023. Career
14 exploration and development shall be designed so that students
15 are appropriately prepared to create an individual career
16 and academic plan pursuant to [section 279.61](#), incorporate
17 foundational career and technical education concepts aligned
18 with the six career and technical education service areas as
19 defined in [subsection 5](#), paragraph "h", incorporate relevant
20 twenty-first century skills to facilitate career readiness,
21 and introduce students to career opportunities within the
22 local community and across this state. The health curriculum
23 shall include age-appropriate and research-based information
24 regarding the characteristics of sexually transmitted diseases.
25 The state board as part of accreditation standards shall adopt
26 curriculum definitions for implementing the program in grades
27 seven and eight. However, [this subsection](#) shall not apply to
28 the teaching of career exploration and development in nonpublic
29 schools.

30 b. (1) The character development curriculum shall include
31 instruction in accountability, altruism, ambition, charity,
32 cheerfulness, cleanliness, compassion, conscience, courage,
33 courtesy, curiosity, dignity, diligence, duty, faith, familial
34 devotion, forbearance, friendliness, gratitude, hardiness,
35 helpfulness, honesty, honor, impartiality, independent

1 judgment, initiative, industry, integrity, justice, kindness,
2 loyalty, moderation, obedience, patience, perseverance,
3 propriety, prudence, punctuality, reliability, responsibility,
4 reverence, self-control, self-reliance, temperance, thrift,
5 tolerance, and trustworthiness.

6 (2) The character development curriculum shall not define
7 or teach character traits in any manner that might promote or
8 encourage students to participate in conduct that would violate
9 any federal, state, or local law.

10 (3) Any assessment of a student's understanding of
11 character development shall be limited to and must reflect the
12 material taught in the classroom.

13 (4) Any assessment administered pursuant to this paragraph
14 shall not evaluate whether a student evidences a specific
15 character trait in the student's life.

16 c. The requirement to provide a character development
17 curriculum shall not apply to a nonpublic school.

18 Sec. 2. Section 256.11, subsection 5, Code 2024, is amended
19 by adding the following new paragraph:

20 NEW PARAGRAPH. m. (1) One unit of character development,
21 which shall include instruction in accountability, altruism,
22 ambition, charity, cheerfulness, cleanliness, compassion,
23 conscience, courage, courtesy, curiosity, dignity,
24 diligence, duty, faith, familial devotion, forbearance,
25 friendliness, gratitude, hardiness, helpfulness, honesty,
26 honor, impartiality, independent judgment, initiative,
27 industry, integrity, justice, kindness, loyalty, moderation,
28 obedience, patience, perseverance, propriety, prudence,
29 punctuality, reliability, responsibility, reverence,
30 self-control, self-reliance, temperance, thrift, tolerance, and
31 trustworthiness.

32 (2) The character development curriculum shall not define
33 or teach character traits in any manner that might promote or
34 encourage students to participate in conduct that would violate
35 any federal, state, or local law.

1 (3) Any assessment of a student's understanding of
2 character development shall be limited to and must reflect the
3 material taught in the classroom.

4 (4) Any assessment administered pursuant to this paragraph
5 shall not evaluate whether a student evidences a specific
6 character trait in the student's life.

7 (5) This paragraph shall not apply to a nonpublic school.

8 Sec. 3. Section 256E.7, subsection 2, paragraph g, Code
9 2024, is amended to read as follows:

10 *g.* Be subject to and comply with the requirements of section
11 256.7, subsection 21, and the educational standards of section
12 256.11, unless specifically waived by the state board during
13 the application process; provided, however, that the state
14 board shall not waive the educational standards related to
15 experiences designed to develop character in kindergarten
16 established in section 256.11, subsection 2, or the educational
17 standards related to the character development curriculum
18 established in section 256.11, subsections 3 and 4, and section
19 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph "m".

20 Sec. 4. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACT. Section 25B.2, subsection
21 3, shall not apply to this Act.

22 EXPLANATION

23 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with
24 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

25 This bill requires school districts and charter schools
26 to provide instruction related to character development to
27 students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12. The
28 bill establishes what the character development curriculum
29 is to include. The bill prohibits the character development
30 curriculum from defining or teaching character traits in any
31 manner that might promote or encourage students to participate
32 in conduct that would violate any federal, state, or local
33 law. The bill provides that any assessment of a student's
34 understanding of character development shall be limited to and
35 must reflect the material taught in the classroom. The bill

1 also provides that any character development assessment that is
2 administered shall not evaluate whether a student evidences a
3 specific character trait in the student's life.

4 The bill may include a state mandate as defined in Code
5 section 25B.3. The bill makes inapplicable Code section
6 25B.2, subsection 3, which would relieve a school district
7 from complying with a state mandate if funding for the cost of
8 the state mandate is not provided or specified. Therefore,
9 school districts are required to comply with any state mandate
10 included in the bill.