Workforce Secondary Traumatic Stress

Purpose
The Mount Vernon School Board No. 320 is committed to preventing and addressing secondary traumatic stress for District personnel by supporting mental health in the workplace. Everyday school staff work with students experiencing trauma and loss. As a result, teachers, school counselors, administrators, and other school staff many experience secondary traumatic stress. When secondary traumatic stress is left unaddressed, it may lead to staff turnover, burnout, adult chronic absenteeism, and health issues that negatively impact everyone in the school community.

Secondary Traumatic Stress
The Board acknowledges that secondary traumatic stress, also called compassion fatigue, is a natural but disruptive set of symptoms that may result when one person learns firsthand of the traumatic experiences of another. Symptoms of secondary traumatic stress may include feelings of isolation, anxiety, dissociation, physical ailments, and sleep disturbances. In addition, those affected by secondary traumatic stress may experience: Changes in memory and perception; alterations in their sense of self-efficacy; a depletion of personal resources; and disruption in their perceptions of safety, trust, and independence.

Policy Statement
The District will promote a positive workplace climate that includes a focus on diversity and inclusion.

The Board hereby establishes a district-wide workforce mental health committee with the following functions:

- Share secondary traumatic stress, stress management, and other mental health resources and supports available through the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Educational Service District, and the School Employees' Benefits Board;
- Share links to a secondary traumatic stress self-assessment tool and any associated resources;
- Report to the Board at least once per year with a summary of committee activities.

The District will regularly assess district-level and school building–level implementation of this policy and procedure. The assessment will include input from the District's workforce. The District will provide appropriate resources and training to schools and staff for continuous improvement.

Legal References: 28A.300 RCW
28A.400 RCW