

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1943

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to creating a comprehensive statewide integrated pathway of preparation and professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce.

Brief Description: Requiring recommendations for preparation and professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce.

Sponsors: House Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Goodman, Priest, Walsh, Probst, Quall, Rolfes, Kenney, Dickerson, Kelley and Santos).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Children's Services: 2/12/09, 2/13/09 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/27/09, 94-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/9/09, 45-0.

Passed House: 4/20/09, 93-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Professional Development Consortium convened by the Department of Early Learning to develop recommendations for a statewide system of preparation and continuing professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce.
- Requires a status update in September 2009, and a report with final recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor by December 2010.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Goodman and Seaquist.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is charged with coordinating, consolidating, and integrating child care and early learning programs and supporting the development of a comprehensive and collaborative system of early learning for Washington's children. Minimum licensing standards for child care and early learning programs serving infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children include limited requirements relating to the qualifications, skills, and experience of the workforce in such programs. In addition to basic qualifications relating to licensing, individual early learning programs may include degree and educational requirements for program administrators or staff. Licensed child care providers in Washington are required to complete a minimum of 10 hours of training annually.

The Washington State Training and Registry System (STARS) is a web-based database to track completion of training by child care providers. The Washington Association for the Education of Young Children (WAEYC) is contracted to administer other components of training, including: information and publicity; training and trainer approval; and the scholarship program to pay for training. Nearly all of the current regulations and training requirements relating to early learning provider preparation and professional development were established by the Department of Social and Health Services prior to the creation of the DEL in 2006.

In spring 2008 the DEL, Thrive by Five Washington (Thrive), and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) signed an early learning partnership resolution designating the DEL as the lead agency for improvements to early learning professional development. In September 2008 the Professional Development Consortium (Consortium) was convened for the purpose of engaging multiple stakeholders in discussions for mapping the process of creating an integrated professional development system. One of the first steps in the Consortium's work was addressing the need for improving functionality of the STARS database. The DEL also is working with the University of Washington to explore methods for mapping and evaluation of current DEL-funded professional development activities in the state. The focus of the Consortium's 2009 work plan relates mostly to identifying the core knowledge and core competencies for early learning professionals.

Work of the Consortium in future years will focus on:

- documenting a career pathway available to interested early learning providers;
- facilitating articulation agreements between and among professional development providers, including agreements to allow approved community-based trainings to apply as credits toward a degree;
- establishing credit-ready training programs leading to specialized credentials geared for working with specific populations of children, such as infants, toddlers, or school-age populations, and for fulfilling different roles in early learning, such as a director or an administrator of a center; and
- developing a comprehensive registry accessible to early learning professionals, directors, trainers, and the DEL.

In addition to the work of the Consortium, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) has been actively engaged in work with a wide array of stakeholders to:

- adopt standards for approval of training programs for early learning providers that can be applied to credit-based college course work; and
- develop clear and common pathways for entry into and completion of early learning professional preparation programs throughout the SBCTC system.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Consortium, in collaboration with the DEL, must develop recommendations for a comprehensive statewide system of preparation and professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce. The membership of the Consortium must include representatives from the following:

1. the DEL;
2. the Department of Health;
3. school districts and educational service districts;
4. the SBCTC;
5. the OSPI;
6. Washington Indian Tribes;
7. Thrive by Five Washington;
8. the Washington Resource and Referral Network; and
9. other organizations representing, researching, or providing professional development to the early learning and school-age workforce.

The Consortium is directed to:

- map current professional development resources and strategies to identify gaps and recommend improved coordination;
- define the core competencies or knowledge areas for the workforce; and
- recommend a plan for implementation of a statewide comprehensive and integrated pathway of preparation and continuing professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce.

The plan must include recommendations relating to:

- knowledge and skills for early learning and school-age program staff, directors, and administrators;
- requirements for articulation agreements to enable effective transitions between two-year and four-year institutions of higher education and to allow staff and professionals to apply approved training programs toward credit-based learning; and
- a comprehensive registry of information to include workforce and professional development data.

The final report from the Consortium also must:

- analyze gaps in professional development to address the needs of those serving children with physical or developmental disabilities, behavioral challenges, and other special needs;
- discuss evidence-based incentives and supports for additional training and education of the workforce;

- analyze evidence-based compensation policies to encourage and reward completion of professional development programs; and
- explore strategies for providing professional development opportunities in language other than English.

The DEL and the Consortium must report back to the Legislature and the Governor with a brief status update on September 15, 2009, and provide final recommendations by December 31, 2010.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 13, 2009.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The importance of professional development for the early learning workforce has been one of the foundational assumptions of the many years of work to improve the quality of early learning. To build strong foundations for children we need to build strong foundations for the people who are caring for our children. And to build strong foundations for our child care providers, we need to build a quality system of preparation and professional development. The education of people who are teaching young children is vital to the overall quality of children's experiences in care.

This bill is intended to establish the framework for the work of the professional development to continue. The DEL and the SBCTC have been working very hard with numerous stakeholders and advocates to begin addressing the need for a comprehensive preparation and professional development system. We know from research that the education, training, compensation, and stability of the early learning workforce are among the most important factors influencing quality. Washington's early learning workforce is characterized by high levels of staff turnover, low wages, and declining levels of education. Washington's professional development opportunities are fragmented, disconnected, and not adequately funded to recruit and retain early learning professionals. Although there are a number of existing programs they are not linked and not available statewide.

The health and welfare of our society depends on the health and welfare of our children. Not all of our children are doing well. A significant opportunity presented by a high quality comprehensive statewide professional development system for early learning providers is the potential for providers to support and influence parents in their quest for parenting information. Great developmental care by a secondary provider will always include engagement of parents, and creating a comprehensive professional development system for early learning providers will reach numerous parents throughout the state.

A major recommendation from the SBCTC in its 2007 report to the Legislature was to work with our partners to outline a career pathway for progression of professional development of the early learning workforce. We have identified two major holes: first, is the lack of a

robust scholarship program for part-time students who are working all day in child care and early learning programs and taking just a class or two at a time; and second, the inconsistency in how different colleges grant credit for training administered by community providers. There are gaps in the state where few opportunities exist for providers to access training and professional development supported by scholarships. For most child care providers, wages don't allow for the cost of higher education unless scholarships are available.

This bill does not create a new state mandate because this work is already underway. This will support existing efforts by adding a few voices to the table and setting out timelines for reporting back to the Legislature and the Governor.

(Information only) The DEL acknowledges that professional development in Washington is fragmented and that partnerships and collaboration with multiple groups are needed. This bill will support the structure of current efforts and provide a framework for continued efforts.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Kagi, prime sponsor; Hannah Lidman, Economic Opportunity Institute; Agda Burchard, Washington Association for the Education of Young Children; Michelle Andreas, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Roberta Wright; Jamie Fabela; Susan Ball; and Rick Allen, United Way of Washington.

(Information only) Sonali Patel, Department of Early Learning.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.