

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1889

As of March 26, 2009

Title: An act relating to paraeducator tutors.

Brief Description: Regarding paraeducator tutor certification.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Sullivan, Priest, Ormsby, Santos and Simpson).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/09/09, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/26/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Juliana Roe (786-7438)

Background: In a school, paraeducators are classified staff who perform many functions, including providing instructional assistance and tutoring under the supervision of a teacher. There are no state requirements regarding the educational qualifications of paraeducators, although the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has developed recommended core competencies for paraeducators.

Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, paraeducators who provide instruction and are paid in whole or in part by Title I funds must meet a federal definition of "highly qualified." Since 2006, Title I paraeducators must either:

- have completed two years of study at an institution of higher education;
- have earned an Associate's Degree (or higher); or
- demonstrate competency through an approved formal assessment.

In Washington, there are multiple options for the formal assessment, including an online assessment administered by the Educational Testing Service; a portfolio that is graded by a regional review panel; a school district assessment approved by the OSPI; or an approved paraeducator apprenticeship program.

Paraeducators who are not associated with Title I are not required to meet these qualifications, although many districts encourage it to allow for flexibility in staffing.

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.

Summary of Bill: The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must adopt rules establishing voluntary paraeducator tutor certification. OSPI must develop paraeducator tutor certification standards, a certification process, and certification requirements. Certifications lasts for five years. OSPI must develop an incentives proposal to encourage people to pursue paraeducator tutor certification. The proposal must be submitted to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2009.

A paraeducator tutor is defined as one who provides or assists in providing direct instruction.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: While investing in paraeducators may not be practical in the current fiscal environment, paraeducators provide a vital service to students. Washington State requires very little paraeducator training and the federal No Child Left Behind Act applies only to those paraeducators in Title I funded schools. Gone are the days in which classroom assistants merely make copies. Paraeducators are responsible for large amounts of the work in classrooms. Paraeducators are integral and essential to the entire school system.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Reen Doser, Public School Employees of Washington; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Asspciation; Doug Nelson, PSE and SEIU; Tom Lopp, OSPI.