

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 2365

---

---

As of February 19, 2014

**Title:** An act relating to paraeducator development.

**Brief Description:** Concerning paraeducator development.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Bergquist, Dahlquist, Santos, Stonier, Haigh, Ryu, Reykdal, Fey, Orwall, Gregerson, Freeman and Pollet).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/13/14, 97-0.

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/19/14.

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Staff:** Eric Wolf (786-7405)

**Background:** Paraeducators are classified staff in a school 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 Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has developed recommended core competencies and guidelines 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 have a high school diploma or equivalent, and one of the three of the following:

- complete two years of study at an institution of higher education;
- earn 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 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:** Workgroup on Current Use of Paraeducators. OSPI must convene a workgroup to examine the use of paraeducators across school districts, including their roles and assignments in the classroom and the variation in paraeducator deployment in support of teachers. The findings of the workgroup must be submitted to the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) by August 31, 2014.

Workgroup to Design New Standards for Paraeducators. PESB must convene a workgroup to design program-specific minimum standards for paraeducators, professional development and education opportunities that support the standards, a paraeducator career ladder, and an articulated pathway for teacher preparation and certification. The workgroup must include representatives from the following:

- PESB;
- the Green River Community College Center of Excellence for Careers in Education;
- educational service districts;
- teacher, paraeducator, principal, school director, and administrator associations;
- career and technical education;
- community and technical college paraeducator apprenticeship and certificate programs;
- colleges of education;
- OSPI;
- special education parents and advocacy organizations;
- organizations representing communities of color and immigrant and refugee communities;
- the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee; and
- at least two paraeducators from each of the education programs for which employment standards are developed.

By January 10, 2015, the PESB workgroup must submit a report to the legislative education committees that recommends the following:

- appropriate minimum employment standards and professional development opportunities for paraeducators who work in programs that assist English Language Learner students, the Learning Assistance Program, and Title I;
- a career ladder that encourages paraeducators to pursue advanced education, professional development, and increased instructional responsibility;
- an articulated pathway of teacher preparation, including a comparison of current pathways to teaching with the articulated pathway and recommended strategies to address gaps; and
- professional development for certificated employees that focuses on maximizing the success of paraeducators in the classroom.

The workgroup must also report on proposals for an articulated pathway for teacher preparation including the following:

- paraeducator certificate and apprenticeship programs that offer course credits that apply to transferrable associate degrees and are aligned with PESB certification standards;
- associate degree programs that add to certificate programs, incorporate field experiences, and are fully transferrable to bachelor's degree programs in education and teacher certification programs;

- bachelor's degree programs that lead to teacher certification without duplicating the associate degrees; and
- PESB standards for cultural competence.

By January 10, 2016, the PESB workgroup must submit a final report that recommends minimum employment standards and professional development for paraeducators working in Basic Education and special education. The report must also contain recommendations for aligning training for paraeducators with training and standards for home care aides.

The section creating the workgroup expires June 30, 2016.

Implementation of Articulated Pathway. PESB and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges may exercise their authorities under current law for program and degree approval to implement the articulated pathway recommended by the workgroup.

Transferability of Credit. Beginning in 2015-16, paraeducator certificate and apprenticeship programs offered by community and technical colleges must provide candidates the opportunity to earn transferrable course credits and incorporate PESB standards for cultural competence.

The bill is null and void if not funded in the budget by June 30, 2014.

**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: Standards and training will help paraeducators focus on acquiring the skills they need to best help the students they work with. Home care aides testified in the House that some aides who work with school-aged children also work with the children in schools in a role similar to what paraeducators sometimes do in the classroom. The second workgroup convened by OSPI to define what paraeducators are currently doing adds value to the bill. Setting standards for paraeducators is critical. The OSPI workgroup will answer the fundamental question of how paraeducators are used currently and will help the PESB workgroup produce standards. Paraeducators work with special needs students during the 180-day school year, and sometimes obtain separate certification to become a home care aide to assist the student during the summer.

OTHER: There is a concern that the timing of workgroup reports is too short to provide community and technical colleges the opportunity to adequately implement the articulated pathway for paraeducator development.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Lucinda Young, WA Education Assn.; Jennifer Wallace, PESB; Doug Nelson, Public School Employees Union; Sherry Krainick, WA State Parent-Teacher Assn.

OTHER: Kathy Goebel, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges.