
Education Committee

E2SSB 5179

Brief Description: Concerning paraeducators.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Hill, McAuliffe, Litzow, Mullet, Hobbs and Dammeier).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill

- Subject to the availability of amounts specifically appropriated for the specific purpose:
 - creates minimum standards for paraeducators who work in certain programs;
 - creates a Paraeducator Board with certain duties;
 - requires districts to implement the Paraeducator Certification in certain programs and gives paraeducators three years to acquire a certification;
 - requires paraeducators to renew their certification every five years;
 - requires the Professional Educator Standards Board to train teachers and principals on working with paraeducators; and
 - requires paraeducator training programs to adopt the paraeducator certification standards.

Hearing Date: 3/23/15

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

Paraeducators.

Paraeducators work under the supervision of teachers to provide various levels of support, including performing instructional duties, assisting with classroom management, and acting as translator. In Washington, there are no educational qualifications or licensure requirements for paraeducators. However, special education paraeducators must have the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the needs of students eligible for special education, and work under the supervision of a certificated teacher with a special education endorsement or a certificated

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educational staff associate. In addition, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has developed recommended core competencies and guidelines for paraeducators who work in education and related service programs for students with disabilities. Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, paraeducators who provide instruction and are paid in whole or in part by federal Title I funds must meet a federal definition of highly qualified. Since 2006, federal Title I paraeducators must have a high school diploma or equivalent, and have one of the following:

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

Training for paraeducators is available in the form of apprenticeships, certificate programs, and an Associate of Arts degree (AA). The training program for the AA includes the general requirements for receipt of an AA and training in the areas of introduction to childhood education, orientation to children with disabilities, fundamentals of childhood education, creative activities for children, instructional materials for children, fine art experiences for children, the psychology of learning, introduction to education, child health and safety, child development and guidance, first aid, and a practicum in a school setting. Beginning with the 2015-16 academic year, the apprenticeship and certificate programs must incorporate the standards for cultural competence, including multicultural education and principles of language acquisition, developed by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB).

Paraeducator Standards Workgroup.

In 2014 the Legislature directed the PESB to convene a workgroup to design program specific minimum employment standards for paraeducators, professional development and education opportunities that support the standards, a paraeducator career ladder, an articulated pathway for teacher preparation and certification, and teacher professional development on how to maximize the use of paraeducators in the classroom. As directed, the workgroup submitted their first report to the Legislature in December 2014, recommending the following:

- appropriate minimum employment standards and professional development opportunities for paraeducators who work in English language learner (ELL) programs, Transitional Bilingual Instruction Programs, federal Limited English Proficiency programs, the Learning Assistance Program (LAP), and the federal disadvantaged program;
- a career ladder that encourages paraeducators to pursue advanced education and professional development;
- an articulated pathway for teacher preparation; and
- professional development for certificated employees that focuses on maximizing the success of paraeducators in the classroom.

The workgroup must submit a final report by January 10, 2016 concerning minimum employment standards for basic education and special education paraeducators, and appropriate professional development and training to help paraeducators meet the employment standards.

Summary of Bill:

Minimum Employment Standards for Paraeducators.

Effective September 1, 2015, subject to the availability of amounts specifically appropriated for this specific purpose, minimum employment standards for paraeducators working in the LAP, federal disadvantaged programs, and ELL programs require that the paraeducator:

- be at least age 18, hold a high school diploma or equivalent, and have received a passing grade on the Education Testing Service's Paraeducator Assessment;
- hold an AA; or
- have earned a 72 quarter credits or 48 semester credits at an institution of higher education.

Paraeducator Board Established.

By September 1, 2015, subject to the availability of amounts specifically appropriated for this specific purpose, a Paraeducator Board (Board) must be established to administer policies and rules for the preparation and certification of paraeducators who work in the LAP, the federal disadvantaged programs, the ELL program, the paraeducator career ladder, or the pathway to teacher certification. The Board must be composed of a paraeducator, a teacher, and a principal, each appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction; a parent whose child receives instructional support from a paraeducator, appointed by the Washington State Parent Teacher Association; a representative of the community and technical colleges, appointed by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; a representative of the institutions of higher education, appointed by the Washington Student Achievement Council; and a nonvoting facilitator, appointed by the PESB. The PESB must also be the administrator of the Board

Paraeducator Certification.

Subject to the availability of amounts specifically appropriated for this specific purpose, the Board must distribute grants, funded by the Legislature, in the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years, to districts that volunteer to field test the implementation of paraeducator certification and the ELL endorsement for paraeducators. Starting September 1, 2017, all school districts must begin implementation of paraeducator certification for paraeducators working in the LAP, the federal disadvantaged programs, and the ELL program. Paraeducators have three years to acquire certification.

The Board must adopt certification standards, including supporting instructional opportunities, demonstrating professionalism and ethical practices, supporting a safe and positive learning environment, communicating effectively and participating in the team process, and demonstrating cultural competency aligned with standards developed by the PESB. The Board must also develop a training practicum and ensure that paraeducators have multiple methods to access certification training. The Board may establish paraeducator certification fees. The OSPI must be provided with funds necessary to administer the paraeducator certificates and endorsements.

English Language Learning Program Paraeducator Endorsement.

Beginning September 1, 2017, subject to the availability of amounts specifically appropriated for this specific purpose, paraeducators who work in ELL programs must acquire an ELL paraeducator endorsement within three years. The Board may adopt rules to implement the endorsement and training standards, and must ensure that training is made available to paraeducators via multiple means.

Advanced Paraeducator Endorsement.

By September 1, 2017, subject to the availability of amounts specifically appropriated for this specific purpose, the Board must develop rules for an advanced paraeducator endorsement, training modules, and a renewal process. The rules must include provisions that allow advanced

paraeducator endorsement-holders to replace a teacher for a short-time in districts that experience difficulty finding substitute teachers. The responsibilities of an advanced paraeducator are specified as mentoring or coaching other paraeducators, assisting in highly impacted classrooms, providing short-term substitution, and assisting in specific specialized instructional support and technology applications.

Paraeducator Endorsement and Certification Renewal.

Subject to the availability of amounts specifically appropriated for this specific purpose, paraeducators must renew their certificate or necessary endorsements every five years by completing the clock hours determined by the Board. The Board may develop training modules and ensure that clock hour training is available via multiple means.

Teacher and Principal Training.

Subject to the availability of amounts specifically appropriated for this specific purpose, the PESB must design and implement a training program for teachers and principals on how to direct a paraeducator working with students and on how to supervise and evaluate paraeducators.

Paraeducator Associate of Arts Degree Requirements.

Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the training program for a paraeducator AA must include training in the paraeducator certification standards adopted by the Board.

Paraeducator Certificate and Apprenticeship Program Requirements.

Subject to the availability of amounts specifically appropriated for this specific purpose, paraeducator certificate and apprenticeship programs must include training in the paraeducator certification standards adopted by the Board.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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