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## Education Committee

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### 2SSB 6408

**Brief Description:** Concerning paraeducators.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Hill, McAuliffe, Litzow, Hobbs, Mullet, Benton, Rolfes, Frockt and Conway).

#### Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

Subject to the availability of amounts specifically appropriated for the specific purposes:

- creates minimum standards for paraeducators who work in certain programs;
- creates a Paraeducator Board with certain duties;
- requires districts to implement the Paraeducator Certification and endorsements in certain programs;
- gives paraeducators three years to acquire certification and endorsements, and requires renewal every five years;
- requires training for teachers and principals on working with paraeducators;
- requires paraeducator training programs to adopt the Paraeducator Certification standards; and
- requires a study on the effectiveness of paraeducators.

**Hearing Date:** 2/22/16, 2/23/16

**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, except for paraeducators working in Special Education Programs.

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

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with a Special Education Endorsement or a certificated 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 special education and related service programs for students with disabilities.

There are traditional and apprenticeship training programs for paraeducators at community and technical colleges that lead to paraeducator certificates and Associate of Arts degrees (AA).

#### Paraeducator Standards Workgroup.

In 2014 the Legislature directed the Professional Educator Standards Board (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.

The workgroup submitted its 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.

On January 10, 2016 the workgroup submitted its final report to the Legislature, additionally recommending:

- foundational employment standards for basic education paraeducators, and specialized standards for paraeducators who work in ELL and Special Education Programs;
- a standard definition of paraeducator;
- a permanent paraeducator advisory board under OSPI;
- a paraeducator professional development system and certificate of completion for ELL and Special Education Endorsements;
- a cost effective statewide tracking system to support required coursework completed by paraeducators;
- certification renewal every five years that includes minimal cost professional development available via multiple pathways;
- a template for a paraeducator handbook for school districts;
- educator training that incorporates appropriate and effective use of paraeducators; and
- professional development for certificated employees that focuses on effective planning, collaboration, and supervision of paraeducators.

#### Cultural Competence Standards.

In 2009 the PESB was directed to adopt articulated teacher knowledge, skill, and performance standards for effective teaching that are evidence-based, measurable, meaningful, and documented in high quality research as being associated with improved student learning. These

standards were required, to the extent possible, to include standards for cultural competency, meaning: knowledge of student cultural histories and contexts, as well as family norms and values in different cultures; knowledge and skills in accessing community resources and community and parent outreach; and skills in adapting instruction to students' experiences and identifying cultural contexts for individual students.

#### E-Certification.

The OSPI has developed an e-certification system that allows educators to apply or renew certificates. The system currently provides certification services to teachers, administrators, educational staff associates, and career technicians.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

The following requirements are subject to the availability of amounts specifically appropriated for the specific purposes.

#### Definition.

A paraeducator is a classified school district employee who works under the supervision of a certificated or licensed staff member to support and assist in providing instructional services to students and their families. Paraeducators are not considered certificated instructional staff.

#### Paraeducator Board.

By September 1, 2016, a Paraeducator Board (Board) must be established to administer policies and rules for the preparation and certification of paraeducators who work in special education, basic education, LAP, the federal Disadvantaged Program, the ELL Programs, 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 OSPI.

The OSPI must also be the administrator of the Board. The OSPI must be provided the funds necessary to administer the Board and the paraeducator certificates and endorsements.

The Board must develop a training practicum and ensure that paraeducators have multiple methods to access certification training. The Board may establish paraeducator certification fees and must adapt the current e-certification process for this use.

#### Minimum Employment Standards.

Effective September 1, 2016, minimum employment standards for paraeducators working in the Special Education Program, Basic Education Program, LAP, federal Disadvantaged Program, 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;

- have earned a 72 quarter credits or 48 semester credits at an institution of higher education; or
- have completed a registered apprenticeship program.

#### Certification.

*Field Test.* The Board must distribute grants, as funded by the Legislature, in the 2017-18 school year to a diverse set of districts that volunteer to field test the implementation of Paraeducator Certification, and the Special Education and the ELL Endorsements for paraeducators.

*Certification.* Starting September 1, 2018, all school districts must begin implementation of Paraeducator Certification for paraeducators working in special education, basic education, the LAP, the federal Disadvantaged Program, and the ELL Programs. Paraeducators have three years to acquire certification. The OSPI must charge an application processing fee for Paraeducator Certificates.

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 the standards developed by the PESB.

#### Endorsements.

*Special Education and ELL Endorsements.* Beginning September 1, 2018, paraeducators who work in Special Education and ELL Programs must acquire endorsements 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 Endorsement.* By September 1, 2018, 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.

#### Renewal of Certification and Endorsement.

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.

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 Training.

The Paraeducator AA, certificate, and apprenticeship programs must include training in the paraeducator certification standards adopted by the Board.

#### Study on Paraeducator Effectiveness.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy must conduct a study on the effectiveness of paraeducators in improving student outcomes and submit a report to the Legislature by December 15, 2016. The study must examine variations in the use of paraeducators across Washington schools and districts and analyze whether and the extent that any differences in students' academic progress can be attributed to the use of paraeducators. The OSPI and the Education Resource and Data Center must provide the data necessary to conduct the analysis. The study must also include a review of the national research literature on the effectiveness of paraeducators in improving student outcomes.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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