
SENATE BILL 6408

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64th Legislature

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By Senators Hill, McAuliffe, Litzow, Hobbs, Mullet, Benton, Rolfes, Frockt, and Conway

Read first time 01/20/16. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to paraeducators; amending RCW 28A.630.400 and
2 28B.50.891; adding a new section to chapter 28A.410 RCW; and creating
3 new sections.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** Paraeducators provide the majority of
6 instruction in programs designed by the legislature to reduce the
7 opportunity gap. By setting common statewide standards, training, and
8 career development for paraeducators, as well as training for
9 teachers and principals who have paraeducators in their classroom,
10 students in these programs have a better chance of succeeding in the
11 classroom.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.410
13 RCW to read as follows:

14 (1) Effective September 1, 2016, the minimum employment standards
15 for a paraeducator who works in the special education program, the
16 basic education program, the learning assistance program, the federal
17 disadvantaged program, and English language learner programs shall be
18 as provided in this subsection. The paraeducator must:

1 (a) Be at least eighteen years of age, hold a high school diploma
2 or its equivalent, and have received a passing grade on the education
3 testing service paraeducator assessment; or

4 (b) Hold an associate of arts degree; or

5 (c) Have earned seventy-two quarter credits or forty-eight
6 semester credits at an institution of higher education.

7 (2)(a) By September 1, 2016, members of the paraeducator board
8 must be appointed. The board shall be composed of one paraeducator,
9 one teacher, one principal, one parent whose child receives
10 instructional support from a paraeducator, one representative of a
11 community or technical college, and one representative of a four-year
12 institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016.

13 (b) Appointments to the board shall be made as follows:

14 (i) The superintendent of public instruction shall appoint the
15 paraeducator, the teacher, the office of the superintendent of public
16 instruction representative, and the principal;

17 (ii) The Washington state parent teacher association shall
18 appoint the parent whose child receives instructional support from a
19 paraeducator;

20 (iii) The state board for community and technical colleges shall
21 appoint the representative of a community or technical college; and

22 (iv) The student achievement council shall appoint the
23 representative of an institution of higher education.

24 (c) A representative from the office of the superintendent of
25 public instruction shall be the nonvoting facilitator of the board.

26 (d) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall
27 be the administrator of the board.

28 (3) Beginning September 1, 2016, the paraeducator board must
29 administer policies and rules for the preparation and certification
30 of paraeducators who work in special education, basic education, the
31 learning assistance program, the federal disadvantaged program, or
32 the English language learners program, the paraeducator career
33 ladder, or the pathway to teacher certification.

34 (4)(a) During the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, grants, as
35 funded by the legislature, shall be distributed by the board to a
36 diverse set of school districts that volunteer to field test the
37 implementation of the paraeducator certification, special education,
38 and English language learner endorsement.

39 (b) Effective September 1, 2018, all school districts must begin
40 implementing the paraeducator certification for paraeducators working

1 in the programs in special education, basic education, the learning
2 assistance program, the federal disadvantaged program, or the English
3 language learner program. Paraeducators have three years to acquire
4 their certification.

5 (c) The certification standards shall be adopted by the board and
6 must include:

7 (i) Supporting instructional opportunities;

8 (ii) Demonstrating professionalism and ethical practices;

9 (iii) Supporting a positive and safe learning environment;

10 (iv) Communicating effectively and participating in the team
11 process; and

12 (v) Demonstrating cultural competency aligned with standards
13 developed by the professional educator standards board under RCW
14 28A.410.270.

15 (d) The board shall develop a practicum and must ensure that
16 paraeducators have multiple methods to access training necessary to
17 become certificated.

18 (e) The board has the authority to establish certification fees
19 paid by paraeducators, however the board shall adapt the current
20 teacher e-certification process to be used for paraeducator
21 certification.

22 (f) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall
23 be provided the necessary funds to administer the board and the
24 paraeducator certificates and endorsements.

25 (g) The board shall develop competency-based testing to allow
26 paraeducators to use their prior experience or training to meet
27 paraeducator standards.

28 (5) Beginning September 1, 2018, all paraeducators working in
29 special education and English language learning programs have three
30 years to acquire their endorsement.

31 (a) The board may adopt rules to implement the endorsement and
32 training standards.

33 (b) The board shall ensure that training is made available to
34 paraeducators in a variety of means that will limit cost and improve
35 access.

36 (6) Paraeducators must renew their certificate or necessary
37 endorsements every five years. In order to renew the certificate or
38 endorsement, they must complete the clock hours determined by the
39 board. The board may develop the training modules as well as ensure

1 that the clock hour training is made available to paraeducators in a
2 variety of means that will limit cost and improve access.

3 (7) The professional educator standards board must design and
4 implement a training program for teachers and principals as it
5 relates to their role working with paraeducators. Teacher training
6 must include how to direct a paraeducator working with students in
7 the paraeducator's classroom. Principal training must include how to
8 supervise and evaluate paraeducators.

9 (8)(a) The board shall develop the rules for an advanced
10 paraeducator endorsement, training modules, and renewal process that
11 must be implemented by September 1, 2018.

12 (b) Some responsibilities of the advanced paraeducator position
13 are mentoring or coaching other paraeducators, assisting in highly
14 impacted classrooms, short-term teacher substitution, and assistance
15 in specific specialized instruction support or technology
16 applications.

17 (c) The rules must include provisions regarding the ability of a
18 person holding an advanced paraeducator endorsement that will qualify
19 the paraeducator to replace a teacher in short absence situations in
20 those districts that are experiencing difficulty finding substitute
21 teachers.

22 (9) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
23 section.

24 (a) "Board" means the paraeducator board.

25 (b) "English language learner programs" or "English language
26 learner endorsement" refers to the English language learners program,
27 the transitional bilingual instruction program, and the federal
28 limited English proficiency program.

29 (c) "Paraeducator" means a school district employee who works
30 under the supervision of a certificated or licensed staff member to
31 support and assist in providing instructional services to students
32 and their families.

33 (10) This section is subject to the availability of amounts
34 specifically appropriated for this specific purpose.

35 **Sec. 3.** RCW 28A.630.400 and 2011 1st sp.s. c 11 s 132 are each
36 amended to read as follows:

37 (1) The professional educator standards board and the state board
38 for community and technical colleges, in consultation with the
39 superintendent of public instruction, the state apprenticeship

1 training council, and community colleges, shall adopt rules as
2 necessary under chapter 34.05 RCW to implement the paraeducator
3 associate of arts degree.

4 (2) As used in this section, a "paraeducator" is an individual
5 who has completed an associate of arts degree for a paraeducator. The
6 paraeducator may be hired by a school district to assist certificated
7 instructional staff in the direct instruction of children in small
8 and large groups, individualized instruction, testing of children,
9 recordkeeping, and preparation of materials. The paraeducator shall
10 work under the direction of instructional certificated staff.

11 (3)(a) If amounts are not appropriated specifically for the
12 purpose of (b) of this subsection, the training program for a
13 paraeducator associate of arts degree shall include, but is not
14 limited to, the general requirements for receipt of an associate of
15 arts degree and training in the areas of introduction to childhood
16 education, orientation to children with disabilities, fundamentals of
17 childhood education, creative activities for children, instructional
18 materials for children, fine art experiences for children, the
19 psychology of learning, introduction to education, child health and
20 safety, child development and guidance, first aid, and a practicum in
21 a school setting.

22 (b) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
23 specific purpose, the training program for a paraeducator associate
24 of arts degree shall include, but is not limited to, the general
25 requirements for receipt of an associate of arts degree and training
26 in the adopted state standards for paraeducators, which include core
27 knowledge and skill competencies in (i) supporting instructional
28 opportunities, (ii) demonstrating professional and ethical practices,
29 (iii) supporting a positive and safe learning environment, (iv)
30 communicating effectively and participating in the team process, and
31 (v) demonstrating cultural competency aligned with standards
32 developed by the professional educator standards board under RCW
33 28A.410.270.

34 (4) Consideration shall be given to transferability of credit
35 earned in this program to teacher preparation programs at colleges
36 and universities.

37 **Sec. 4.** RCW 28B.50.891 and 2014 c 136 s 4 are each amended to
38 read as follows:

1 Beginning with the 2015-16 academic year, any community or
2 technical college that offers an apprenticeship program or
3 certificate program for paraeducators must provide candidates the
4 opportunity to earn transferable course credits within the program.
5 The programs must also incorporate the standards for cultural
6 competence, including multicultural education and principles of
7 language acquisition, developed by the professional educator
8 standards board under RCW 28A.410.270. Subject to the availability of
9 amounts specifically appropriated for this specific purpose, the
10 programs must also include core knowledge and skill competencies in:
11 Supporting instructional opportunities, demonstrating professional
12 and ethical practices, supporting a positive and safe learning
13 environment, and communicating effectively and participating in the
14 team process.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) Subject to the availability of amounts
16 appropriated for this specific purpose, the Washington state
17 institute for public policy shall conduct a study on the
18 effectiveness of paraeducators in improving student outcomes in
19 Washington state. The study shall examine variation in the use of
20 paraeducators across schools and districts and analyze whether and
21 the extent that any differences in students' academic progress can be
22 attributed to the use of paraeducators. The office of the
23 superintendent of public instruction and the education data center
24 shall provide the data necessary to conduct the analysis. The study
25 must also include a review of the national research literature on the
26 effectiveness of paraeducators in improving student outcomes.

27 (2) The institute shall submit a final report to the relevant
28 committees of the legislature by December 15, 2016.

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