
Education Committee

SSB 6388

Brief Description: Concerning paraeducators.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Mullet and Rivers).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Delays the implementation of the minimum employment requirements for paraeducators and the provision of the fundamental course of study to paraeducators.
- Provides that paraeducators are only required to take, and districts are only required to provide, the fundamental course of study and the general courses on the state paraeducator standards of practice in school years for which state funding is appropriated specifically for this purpose and only for the number of days that are funded by the appropriation.
- Makes changes to the Pipeline for Paraeducators Conditional Scholarship, for example the experience requirement is to be defined in rule rather than in statute.

Hearing Date: 2/20/18

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

A paraeducator means 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.

Minimum Employment Requirements.

Effective September 1, 2018, all paraeducators must meet the following minimum employment requirements. Paraeducators must:

1. be at least 18 years of age and hold a high school diploma or its equivalent; and

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2. have received a passing grade on the paraeducator assessment; hold an Associate of Arts degree; have met minimum higher education credit requirements; or have completed a registered apprenticeship program.

Until September 1, 2018, only paraeducators who work in federal Title I, part A programs, which provide financial assistance to schools and districts with high numbers of children from low-income families, are required to meet minimum employment standards.

Fundamental Course of Study.

Subject to the appropriation of specific funds, beginning September 1, 2019, school districts must provide a four-day fundamental course of study on the state standards of practice to paraeducators who have not completed the course. Districts must use best efforts to provide the course before paraeducators begin to work with students and their families. At a minimum, districts must provide the course by the following deadlines based on hire date:

- for paraeducators hired on or before September 1, by September 30 of that year, regardless of the size of the district; and
- for paraeducators hired after September 1: for districts with 10,000 or more students, within four months of the date of hire; and for districts with fewer than 10,000 students, no later than September 1 of the following year.

General Paraeducator Certificate and Courses.

Paraeducators may become eligible for a general paraeducator certificate by completing the four-day fundamental course of study and an additional 10 days of general courses on the state paraeducator standards of practice. Paraeducators are not required to meet the general paraeducator certificate requirements unless amounts are appropriated for school districts to provide the courses.

Subject Matter and Advanced Paraeducator Certificates.

The Paraeducator Board must adopt rules for paraeducator subject matter certificates in English language learner and special education, and an advanced paraeducator certificate. By September 1, 2018, the Paraeducator Board must approve, and develop if necessary, courses required to meet the paraeducator certificate requirements, where the courses are offered in a variety of means that will limit costs and improve access.

Pipeline for Paraeducators Conditional Scholarship.

The Pipeline for Paraeducators Conditional Scholarship (Pipeline CS), administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), provides financial assistance to paraeducators without a college degree who have at least three years of classroom experience. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) selects participants for the program using specified statutory criteria. Participants are expected to complete an Associate of Arts degree in two years or less and become eligible for a teacher certificate with an endorsement in a subject matter shortage area through Route One of the Alternative Route Teacher Certification (Alternative Route) program. The annual award of up to \$4,000 may be used for the cost of tuition, fees, and educational expenses and transportation for the Alternative Route program in which the participant is enrolled. The WSAC may adjust the annual award by the average rate of tuition and fee increases at the state community and technical colleges.

Summary of Bill:

Minimum Employment Requirements.

Rather than requiring all paraeducators to meet minimum employment requirements by September 1, 2018, the following deadlines must be met:

- a person working as a paraeducator for a school district before or during the 2017-18 school year must meet the minimum employment requirements by the date of hire for the 2019-20 school year or any subsequent school year; and
- a person who has not previously worked as a paraeducator for a school district must meet the minimum employment requirements by the date of hire for the 2018-19 school year or any subsequent school year.

By October 1, 2018, a school district that does not receive funding under Title I must report to the Paraeducator Board with the following information about paraeducators hired by the school district for the 2018-19 school year, as of September 1, 2018: the total number of paraeducators; and the number who meet the minimum employment requirements.

Paraeducator Courses.

The deadlines for school districts to provide the fundamental course of study to paraeducators is delayed as follows: for paraeducators hired for the 2018-19 school year, school districts must provide the fundamental course of study by September 1, 2020; and for paraeducators not hired for the 2018-19 school year, but hired for the 2019-20 school year, school districts must provide the fundamental course of study by September 1, 2021. For paraeducators hired subsequent to the 2019-20 school year, school districts must provide the fundamental course of study by the deadlines based on hire date.

Paraeducators are only required to take, and districts are only required to provide, the fundamental course of study and the general courses on the state paraeducator standards of practice in school years for which state funding is appropriated specifically for this purpose and only for the number of days that are funded by the appropriation.

Pipeline for Paraeducators Conditional Scholarship.

Rather than requiring participants in the Pipeline CS to have at least three years of classroom experience, the PESB is directed to define the experience requirement. The limitation that participants in the Pipeline CS program have a plan to enroll in an Alternative Route One program is removed and is expanded to a plan to enroll in any Alternative Route program. The use of the Pipeline CS award for Alternative Route program purposes is removed because participants are not part of the Alternative Route program at the time of participation in the Pipeline CS program. Finally, it is specified that the Pipeline CS "award may be adjusted annually," rather than specifying that "the Student Achievement Council may adjust the annual award."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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