
Education Committee

HB 1658

Brief Description: Concerning paraeducators.

Sponsors: Representatives Paul, Steele, Bergquist, Harris, Santos, Callan, Appleton, Doglio, Pollet and Young.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides that, if state funding is appropriated for the fundamental course of study, then one day of the course must be provided in person.
- Modifies deadlines by which districts must provide the fundamental course of study to paraeducators hired for the 2020-21 school year and beyond.
- Encourages districts to provide at least one of the 10 days of general courses on the state paraeducator standards as a professional learning day, where paraeducators collaborate with certified staff and other classified staff on applicable courses.
- Directs the Paraeducator Board to promote the use of paraeducators to meet educator workforce needs in specified ways.
- Requires the Paraeducator Board to submit a report to the Legislature on using paraeducators in teacher roles or supporting paraeducators to become teachers.

Hearing Date: 2/14/19, 2/14/19

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

Paraeducators. 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.

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.

Fundamental Course of Study. 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. However, districts must only provide the course 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.

School districts must use best efforts to provide the fundamental course of study before the paraeducator begins to work with students and their families, and at a minimum by the following deadlines:

- for paraeducators hired for the 2018-19 school year, by September 1, 2020;
- for paraeducators not hired for the 2018-19 school year, but hired for the 2019-20 school year, by September 1, 2021; and
- for paraeducators hired for the 2020-21 school year and in subsequent years:
 - 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: (a) for districts with 10,000 or more students, within four months of the date of hire; and (b) for districts with fewer than 10,000 students, no later than September 1st of the following year.

General 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 the courses necessary to meet the requirements are funded by the state.

Professional Learning. The term "professional learning" is defined in statute to mean a comprehensive, sustained, job-embedded, and collaborative approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement. "Professional learning" fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance and must comprise learning that is aligned with student learning needs, educator development needs, and school district, or state improvement goals. "Professional learning" must have as its primary focus the improvement of teachers' and school leaders' effectiveness in assisting all students to meet the state learning standards.

Rules on Limited Certificates. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) has statutory authority to specify the types and kinds of educator certificates to be issued and the conditions for certification, including certification for emergency or temporary duty. For example, to allow school districts to hire a competent, but not fully qualified, individual to fill a teaching position in a shortage area, the PESB has developed the conditional certificate. When requesting a conditional certificate, the school district must comply with specified requirements, such as assigning a mentor and developing a written plan of support. For individuals applying for a conditional teaching certificate in special education, federal law and state rule require that the individual hold a bachelor's degree or higher and be enrolled in an approved teacher preparation program resulting in a teacher certificate endorsed in special education.

Summary of Bill:

Fundamental Course of Study. If state funding appropriated specifically for the purpose of the fundamental course of study for paraeducators is sufficient for only one day of the four-day fundamental course of study, then the one day must be provided in person. If state funding is sufficient for more than one day of the four-day fundamental course, then at least one day of the course must be provided in person.

For paraeducators hired for the 2020-21 school year and subsequent years, the deadlines for school districts to provide the fundamental course of study to paraeducators are modified as follows:

- in all districts, for paraeducators hired on or before September 1: the first two days of the fundamental course of study must be provided by September 30 of that year and the second two days of the fundamental course of study must be provided within six months of the date of hire; and
- in districts with 10,000 or more students, for paraeducators hired after September 1: the first two days of the fundamental course of study must be provided within four months of the date of hire and the second two days of the fundamental course of study must be provided within six months of the date of hire or by September 1 of the following year, whichever is sooner.

General Courses and Professional Learning. School districts are encouraged to provide at least one day of the 10 days of general courses on the state paraeducator standards of practice as a professional learning day, where paraeducators collaborate with certified staff and other classified staff on applicable courses.

Rules on Limited Certificates. The Professional Educator Standards Board must revise its rules on limited certificates to allow for the issuance of a conditional teaching certificate in special education to a paraeducator who holds an unexpired subject matter certificate in special education to the same extent to an individual with a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited college or university who is enrolled in an approved teacher preparation program resulting in a teacher certificate with an endorsement in special education.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 5, 2019.

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