

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1658

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, April 1, 2019

Title: An act relating to paraeducators.

Brief Description: Concerning paraeducators.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Paul, Steele, Bergquist, Harris, Santos, Callan, Appleton, Doglio, Pollet and Young).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/06/19, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/22/19, 4/01/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that the Paraeducator Board promote the use of paraeducators to meet educator workforce needs through communicating and encouraging paraeducators to utilize a limited teaching certificate or enroll in an alternative route teacher certification program.
- Modifies timelines for the paraeducator fundamental course of study and requires that at least one day of the course be provided in person.
- Encourages school districts to provide at least one day of general paraeducator certificate courses on standards of practice as a professional learning day.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Holy, Hunt, McCoy, Mullet, Padden, Pedersen, Salomon and Wagoner.

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: Paraeducators. Paraeducators provide instructional services to students while working under the direct supervision of instructional certificated staff. These services can include directly instructing children in small and large groups, individualized instruction,

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testing children, and preparing materials. Paraeducators are categorized under Washington law as classified instructional employees.

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, school 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 paraeducators begin to work with students and their families, and at a minimum by the following deadlines:

- for paraeducators hired by the 2018-19 school year, by September 1, 2020; and
- for paraeducators hired for the 2019-20 school year, by September 1, 2021.

For paraeducators hired for subsequent years and on or before September 1st, the deadline is September 30th of that year. For paraeducators hired after September 1st, the deadlines are within four months of the date of hire for districts with 10,000 or more students, and no later than September 1st of the following year for districts with fewer than 10,000 students.

General Courses. Paraeducators may become eligible for a general paraeducator certificate by completing the four-day fundamental course of study and an additional ten 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.

Alternative Routes to Certification. State law provides for creating alternative routes to teacher certification by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB). Current paraeducators with an associate of arts (AA) degree may enroll in a teacher certification program and complete both their baccalaureate degree and residency certification requirements. Certification candidates must also pass the statewide basic skills exam and must earn at least one subject matter or geographic shortage area endorsement.

Summary of Bill: Use of Paraeducators to Meet Workforce Needs. The Paraeducator Board must promote the use of paraeducators to meet educator workforce needs by:

- communicating to school districts and educational service districts (ESDs) the requirements for requesting a limited teaching certificate on behalf of a paraeducator;
- encouraging and supporting paraeducators to take on the role of a teacher under a limited teaching certificate or by enrolling in an alternative route teacher certification program; and
- supporting school districts and ESDs in using paraeducators in teaching roles.

By December 10, 2019, the Paraeducator Board must report to the Legislature with recommendations on reducing barriers to school districts and ESDs using paraeducators on limited teaching certificates in teacher roles or supporting paraeducators to become fully certificated teachers.

Fundamental Course of Study. If funding is appropriated for the fundamental course of study for paraeducators, one day of the course must be provided in person. For paraeducators hired for the 2020-21 school year and subsequent years, the deadlines to provide the fundamental course of study are modified based on district size.

For all paraeducators hired on or before September 1st, the first two days of the course must be provided by September 30th of that year, with the second two days of the course provided within six months of the date of hire.

For districts with 10,000 or more students, the first two days of the course must be provided within four months of the date of hire, and the second two days must be provided within six months of the date of hire, or by September 1st of the following year, whichever is sooner.

General Courses. School districts are encouraged to provide at least one day 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The bill gives flexibility in providing training. Face-to-face training will be beneficial to paraeducators and those involved in the training, and would provide needed collaboration between paraeducators and staff. Paraeducators are important members of the instructional team. By rolling out training before school starts, it will ensure that children receive the highest educational standards from day one. The bill fine-tunes previous efforts and will be a good addition to current law.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Cathy Smith, Professional Educator Standards Board Paraeducator Board Chair.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.