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## Education Committee

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### SSB 6129

**Brief Description:** Concerning paraeducator development.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Hill, McAuliffe, Tom, Dammeier, Hobbs, Litzow, Baumgartner and Mullet).

#### Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Professional Educator Standards Board to convene a work group to design program-specific minimum employment standards for paraeducators, recommend professional development, develop a career ladder, and design an articulated pathway for teacher preparation from paraeducator certificates through teacher certification.
- Requires an initial report with recommendations in specific areas by January 10, 2015, and a final report by January 10, 2016.
- Requires community and technical college apprenticeship and certificate programs for paraeducators to offer transferrable course credits beginning in 2015-16.

**Hearing Date:** 2/19/14

**Staff:** Barbara McLain (786-7383).

#### **Background:**

According to the School District Personnel Summary Report published by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), school districts employed 23,083 instructional aides or paraeducators in the 2012-13 school year. This translates into 12,002 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff positions.

The table below indicates the programs to which these paraeducators were assigned. Head count figures are duplicated because some individuals are assigned to more than one program.

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*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.*

<b>Program</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>FTE</b>
Special Education	12,718	6,049
Basic Education	10,384	3,077
Title I/Learning Assistance Program	4,525	1,399
English Language Learners	2,014	672
Early Childhood	685	390
Other Education	950	338
Food Services/Transportation	425	77

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) establishes minimum qualifications for teachers and other certificated employees, including standards for cultural competence. However, paraeducators are classified employees. Federal law requires that paraeducators employed using Title I funds and those assigned to special education meet certain minimum qualifications or demonstrate core competencies. Paraeducators using Braille must pass a competency test, and legislation enacted in 2013 requires that educational interpreters for the deaf must meet a specified competency level beginning in 2016-17. There are also standards for individuals who work in state and federally funded early learning programs.

Otherwise, qualifications for paraeducators are determined by the employing school district.

There are a number of options for paraeducators to meet the minimum qualifications, including apprenticeship programs offered through the Public School Employees of Washington and associate degrees from community and technical colleges. Some community and technical colleges also offer non-degree certificate programs for paraeducators.

### **Summary of Bill:**

The PESB must convene a work group including the Green River Community College Center of Excellence for Careers in Education, Educational Service Districts, educator associations, community and technical college paraeducator apprenticeship and certificate programs, colleges of education, the OSPI, special education parents and advocacy organizations, organizations representing communities of color, and the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee.

By January 10, 2015, the PESB work group must submit a report to the legislative education committees that recommends the following:

1. minimum employment standards and professional development opportunities for paraeducators who work in programs that assist English Language Learner students, the Learning Assistance Program, and Title I;
2. a career ladder that encourages paraeducators to pursue advanced education, professional development, and increased instructional responsibility;
3. an articulated pathway of teacher preparation, including a comparison of current pathways to teaching with the articulated pathway and recommended strategies to address gaps; and

4. professional development for certificated employees that focuses on maximizing the success of paraeducators in the classroom.

The pathway must include:

- paraeducator certificate and apprenticeship programs that offer course credits that apply to transferrable associate degrees and are aligned with the PESB certification standards;
- associate degree programs that add to certificate programs, incorporate field experiences, and are fully transferrable to bachelor's degree programs;
- bachelor's degree programs that lead to teacher certification without duplicating the associate degrees; and
- the PESB standards for cultural competence.

By January 10, 2016, the PESB work group must submit a final report that recommends minimum employment standards and professional development for paraeducators working in Basic Education and special education.

The PESB and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges may exercise their authorities under current law for program and degree approval to implement the articulated pathway.

Beginning in 2015-16, paraeducator certificate and apprenticeship programs offered by community and technical colleges must provide candidates the opportunity to earn transferrable course credits and incorporate the PESB standards for cultural competence.

**Appropriation:** The sum of \$150,000 is appropriated from the general fund to the PESB to convene the work group.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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