
**Early Learning & Children's Services
Committee**

HB 1943

Brief Description: Requiring recommendations for preparation and professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce.

Sponsors: Representatives Kagi, Goodman, Priest, Walsh, Probst, Quall, Rolfes, Kenney, Dickerson, Kelley and Santos.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the development of recommendations for a statewide system of preparation and continuing professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce.
- Requires a status update in September 2009, and a report with final recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor by December 2010.

Hearing Date: 2/12/09

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120)

Background:

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is charged with coordinating, consolidating, and integrating child care and early learning programs and supporting the development of a comprehensive and collaborative system of early learning for Washington's children. Minimum licensing standards for child care and early learning programs serving infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children include limited requirements relating to the qualifications, skills, and experience of the workforce in such programs. In addition to basic qualifications relating to licensing, individual early learning programs may include degree and educational requirements for program administrators or staff. Licensed child care providers in Washington are required to complete a minimum of 10 hours of training annually.

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.

The Washington State Training and Registry System (STARS) is a web-based database to track completion of training by child care providers. The Washington Association for the Education of Young Children (WAEYC) is contracted to administer other components of training, including: information and publicity; training and trainer approval; and the scholarship program to pay for training. Nearly all of the current regulations and training requirements relating to early learning provider preparation and professional development were established by the Department of Social and Health Services prior to the creation of the DEL in 2006.

In spring 2008, the DEL, Thrive by Five Washington (Thrive), and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) signed an early learning partnership resolution designating the DEL as the lead agency for improvements to early learning professional development. In September 2008, the Professional Development Consortium (Consortium) was convened for the purpose of engaging multiple stakeholders in discussions for mapping the process of creating an integrated professional development system. One of the first steps in the Consortium's work was addressing the need for improving functionality of the STARS database. The DEL also is working with the University of Washington to explore methods for mapping and evaluation of current DEL-funded professional development activities in the state. The focus of the Consortium's 2009 work plan relates mostly to identifying the core knowledge and core competencies for early learning professionals.

Work of the Consortium in future years will focus on:

- documenting a career pathway available to interested early learning providers;
- facilitating articulation agreements between and among professional development providers, including agreements to allow approved community-based trainings to apply as credits toward a degree;
- establishing credit-ready training programs leading to specialized credentials geared for working with specific populations of children, such as infants, toddlers, or school-age populations, and for fulfilling different roles in early learning, such as a director or an administrator of a center; and
- developing a comprehensive registry accessible to early learning professionals, directors, trainers, and the DEL.

In addition to the work of the Consortium, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) has been actively engaged in work with a wide array of stakeholders to:

- adopt standards for approval of training programs for early learning providers that can be applied to credit-based college course work; and
- develop clear and common pathways for entry into and completion of early learning professional preparation programs throughout the SBCTC system.

Summary of Bill:

The Consortium, in collaboration with the DEL, must develop recommendation for a comprehensive statewide system of preparation and professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce. The membership of the Consortium must include representatives from the following:

1. the DEL;
2. the Department of Health;
3. school districts and educational service districts;

4. unions representing child care providers;
5. the SBCTC;
6. the Higher Education Coordinating Board;
7. the OSPI;
8. Washington Indian Tribes;
9. Thrive by Five Washington;
10. Schools's Out Washington;
11. the WAEYC;
12. the Washington Association for Head Start and ECEAP;
13. the Washington Association for the education of personnel in early childhood programs;
14. the Washington Resource and Referral Network; and
15. the Washington State Family Child Care Association.

The Consortium is directed to:

- map current professional development resources and strategies to identify gaps and recommend improved coordination;
- define the core competencies or knowledge areas for the workforce; and
- recommend a plan for implementation of a statewide comprehensive and integrated pathway of preparation and continuing professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce.

The plan must include recommendations relating to:

- knowledge and skills for early learning and school-age program staff, directors, and administrators;
- requirements for articulation agreements to enable effective transitions between two-year and four-year institutions of higher education and to allow staff and professionals to apply approved training programs toward credit-based learning; and
- a comprehensive registry of information to include workforce and professional development data.

The final report from the Consortium also must:

- analyze gaps in professional development to address the needs of those serving children with physical or developmental disabilities, behavioral challenges, and other special needs;
- discuss evidence-based incentives and supports for additional training and education of the workforce;
- analyze evidence-based compensation policies to encourage and reward completion of professional development programs; and
- explore strategies for providing professional development opportunities in language other than English.

The DEL and the Consortium must report back to the Legislature and the Governor with a brief status update on September 15, 2009, and provide final recommendations by December 31, 2010.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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