

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1658

As Passed House:
March 6, 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:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/14/19, 2/19/19 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/6/19, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute 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.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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.

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Paul, Vice Chair; Steele, Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Volz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Callan, Corry, Harris, Kilduff, Kraft, Ortiz-Self, Rude, Stonier, Thai, Valdez and Ybarra.

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.

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 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 1 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.

Advanced Paraeducator Certificate. An advanced paraeducator certificate is a credential earned by a paraeducator who may have the following duties: assisting in highly impacted classrooms, assisting in specialized instructional support and instructional technology applications, mentoring and coaching other paraeducators, and acting as a short-term emergency substitute teacher. The requirements for an advanced paraeducator certificate are completing 75 hours of professional development in topics related to the duties of an advanced paraeducator, every five years.

Rules on Limited Teaching 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. 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. To allow a student teacher to serve as a substitute in the absence of the classroom teacher, the PESB has developed the intern substitute certificate.

Alternative Route Teacher Certification Program. The PESB approves entities, including community colleges, universities, educational service districts, and community-based organizations, to offer educator preparation programs. Approved educator preparation programs may offer an Alternative Route Teacher Certification Program, which is a nontraditional program that operates as a partnership between a teacher preparation program and one or more school districts. This program allows people who hold an associate's degree or higher to work in a school while earning their teacher certification.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Fundamental Course of Study. If state funding is appropriated specifically for the purpose of the fundamental course of study for paraeducators, 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 course must be provided by September 30 of that year, and the second two days of the course 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 course must be provided within four months of the date of hire, and the second two days of the course must be provided within six months of the date of hire or by September 1 of the following year, whichever is sooner.

General Courses. 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.

Promoting Use of Paraeducators to Meet Workforce Needs. The Paraeducator Board must promote the use of paraeducators to meet educator workforce needs by: (1) communicating to school districts and educational service districts (ESDs) the requirements for requesting a limited teaching certificate on behalf of a paraeducator; (2) encouraging and supporting paraeducators to take on the role of teacher under a limited teaching certificate or by enrolling in an Alternative Route Teacher Certification Program; and (3) supporting school districts and the ESDs in using paraeducators in teacher roles.

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

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The bill promotes opportunities for paraeducators to enroll in Alternative Route Teacher Certification Programs or to teach using a limited teaching certificate. Paraeducators who want to become teachers should be encouraged to do so.

It is important to support paraeducator training and, when school districts have funding for it, one of those training days should be face-to-face. There should be collaboration between paraeducators and certificated staff. The bill gives school districts a longer time to provide paraeducators with training when they hire a paraeducator after September 1.

Washington is a national leader in the development of professional learning for paraeducators. The state took a step forward by establishing the Paraeducator Board, minimum employment requirements, statewide standards, and a framework for the paraeducator certificate program.

The proposed substitute requires that the Paraeducator Board promote the importance and possibility of paraeducators becoming teachers. Not every paraeducator wants to become a teacher, but it is appropriate for the Paraeducator Board to encourage and support paraeducators who do want to become teachers.

The Paraeducator Board must make sure that school districts are prepared to provide professional development to paraeducators beginning this fall. About 2,700 paraeducators will receive the four-day fundamental course of study, if funded by the state. This bill affirms the importance of delivering professional development in person. There are online courses available that are well-researched, but in-person training days are more effective and give a paraeducators a greater opportunity to incorporate what they are learning.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Paul, prime sponsor; Alexandra Manuel, Professional Educator Standards Board; and Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.