
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6129

State of Washington

63rd Legislature

2014 Regular Session

By Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Hill, McAuliffe, Tom, Dammeier, Hobbs, Litzow, Baumgartner, and Mullet)

READ FIRST TIME 01/27/14.

1 AN ACT Relating to paraeducator development; adding a new section
2 to chapter 28A.410 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.50 RCW;
3 creating new sections; making an appropriation; and providing an
4 expiration date.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature acknowledges that
7 paraeducators have become a significant resource to students who need
8 additional education assistance. School districts have come to rely
9 upon paraeducators who, for instance, provided more than half of the
10 hours of instruction in the 2012-13 school year to students in the
11 learning assistance program, the transitional bilingual instruction
12 program, the federal disadvantaged program, head start, and the federal
13 limited English proficiency program. Paraeducators are often the
14 primary caretakers in the classroom for students with special needs and
15 provided more than half of the hours of instruction in the 2012-13
16 school year to students in special education.

17 The legislature further recognizes that there is significant
18 variability in paraeducator standards. In some situations,
19 paraeducators are expected to provide services for which they are not

1 trained or qualified. In other situations, their knowledge, skills,
2 and commitment to education are underused. A clear definition of the
3 differentiated knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with
4 different jobs will ensure that students receive the education services
5 they need and deserve.

6 Paraeducator training and professional development varies
7 significantly dependent upon school district and program. With few
8 exceptions, paraeducator training has been significantly reduced over
9 the last several years due to state and school district budget cuts.

10 A carefully constructed paraeducator development program is
11 intended to place the highest qualified paraeducators working with the
12 highest need students. Such a program when combined with a career
13 ladder will offer paraeducators real opportunities for upward mobility.
14 Since paraeducators more closely reflect the cultural diversity of the
15 student population, a development program and career ladder is likely
16 to encourage more paraeducators to become teachers. Training teachers
17 how to work with a paraeducator in their classrooms will increase
18 paraeducators' ability to teach students who need additional
19 assistance.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1)(a) The professional educator standards
21 board shall convene a work group to design program specific minimum
22 employment standards for paraeducators, professional development and
23 education opportunities that support the standards, a paraeducator
24 career ladder, an articulated pathway for teacher preparation and
25 certification, and teacher professional development on how to maximize
26 the use of paraeducators in the classroom.

27 (b) The work group must include representatives of the professional
28 educator standards board; the Green River Community College center of
29 excellence for careers in education; educational service districts;
30 community and technical college paraeducator apprenticeship and
31 certificate programs; colleges of education; teacher, paraeducator,
32 principal, and administrator associations; career and technical
33 education; special education parents and advocacy organizations;
34 community-based organizations representing immigrant and refugee
35 communities; community-based organizations representing communities of
36 color; the educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability
37 committee; and the office of the superintendent of public instruction.

1 (2) By January 10, 2015, the work group shall submit a report to
2 the education committees of the legislature that recommends:

3 (a) Appropriate minimum employment standards and professional
4 development opportunities for paraeducators who work in:

5 (i) English language learner programs, transitional bilingual
6 instruction programs, and federal limited English proficiency programs;
7 and

8 (ii) The learning assistance program and federal disadvantaged
9 program;

10 (b) A career ladder that encourages paraeducators to pursue
11 advanced education and professional development as well as increased
12 instructional ability and responsibility;

13 (c) An articulated pathway for teacher preparation that includes:

14 (i) Paraeducator certificate and apprenticeship programs that offer
15 course credits that apply to transferrable associate degrees and are
16 aligned with the standards and competencies for teachers adopted by the
17 professional educator standards board;

18 (ii) Associate degree programs that build on and do not duplicate
19 the courses and competencies of paraeducator certificate programs,
20 incorporate field experiences, are aligned with the standards and
21 competencies for teachers adopted by the professional educator
22 standards board, and are transferrable to bachelor's degree in
23 education programs and teacher certification programs;

24 (iii) Bachelor's degree programs that lead to teacher certification
25 that build on and do not duplicate the courses and competencies of
26 transferrable associate degrees;

27 (iv) Incorporation of the standards for cultural competence
28 developed by the professional educator standards board under RCW
29 28A.410.270 throughout the courses and curriculum of the pathway,
30 particularly focusing on multicultural education and principles of
31 language acquisition; and

32 (v) Comparing the current status of pathways for teacher
33 certification to the elements of the articulated pathway, highlighting
34 gaps and recommending strategies to address the gaps;

35 (d) Professional development for certificated employees that
36 focuses on maximizing the success of paraeducators in the classroom.

37 (3) The work group must submit a final report of its

1 recommendations to the education committees of the legislature by
2 January 10, 2016, concerning:

3 (a) Minimum employment standards for basic education and special
4 education paraeducators; and

5 (b) Appropriate professional development and training to help
6 paraeducators meet the employment standards.

7 (4) This section expires June 30, 2016.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.410
9 RCW to read as follows:

10 The professional educator standards board and the state board for
11 community and technical colleges may exercise their respective
12 authorities regarding program approval to implement the articulated
13 pathway for teacher preparation and certification recommended pursuant
14 to section 2, chapter . . ., Laws of 2014 (section 2 of this act) in
15 approved teacher certification programs and certificate and degree
16 programs offered by community and technical colleges.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.50 RCW
18 to read as follows:

19 Beginning with the 2015-16 academic year, any community or
20 technical college that offers an apprenticeship program or certificate
21 program for paraeducators must provide candidates the opportunity to
22 earn transferrable course credits within the program. The programs
23 must also incorporate the standards for cultural competence, including
24 multicultural education and principles of language acquisition,
25 developed by the professional educator standards board under RCW
26 28A.410.270.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** The sum of one hundred fifty thousand
28 dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for
29 the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015, from the general fund to the
30 professional educator standards board to convene a work group in
31 accordance with section 2 of this act.

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