
Education Committee

HB 2365

Brief Description: Concerning paraeducator development.

Sponsors: Representatives Bergquist, Dahlquist, Santos, Stonier, Haigh, Ryu, Reykdal, Fey, Orwall, Gregerson, Freeman and Pollet.

Brief Summary of 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 paraeducator 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: 1/27/14

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 31,701 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.

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.

Program	Headcount	FTE
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
TOTAL	31,701	12,002

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. Paraeducators employed using federal Title I funds must meet one of three minimum qualifications:

1. at least two years of postsecondary education at an accredited institution of higher education;
2. an associate degree or higher; or
3. completion of a formal academic assessment of knowledge and skills (currently the Educational Testing Services ParaPro Assessment).

Title I paraeducators acting solely as translators or conducting family engagement activities are only required to have a high school diploma or equivalent.

Under federal law and rules adopted by the OSPI, paraeducators assigned to assist in special education must "present evidence of skills and knowledge necessary to meet the needs of students eligible for special education." A list of 14 Special Education Core Competencies for Paraeducators provides guidance for school districts to assure their paraeducators meet this requirement.

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 pathway 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, community and technical college paraeducator apprenticeship and certificate programs, colleges of education, the OSPI,

and at least two paraeducators from each of the education programs for which employment standards will be developed.

By January 10, 2015, the 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 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 for fiscal year 2015 from the general fund to the PESB to convene the workgroup.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 22, 2014.

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