
Education Committee

HB 1293

Brief Description: Concerning paraeducators.

Sponsors: Representatives Bergquist, Magendanz, Santos, Muri, Ortiz-Self, Reykdal, S. Hunt, Pollet and Gregerson.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates minimum standards for paraeducators who work in certain programs.
- Creates a Paraeducator Board with certain duties.
- Requires districts to implement the Paraeducator Certification in certain programs and gives paraeducators three years to acquire a certification.
- Requires paraeducators to renew their certification every five years.
- Requires the Professional Educator Standards Board to train teachers and principals on working with paraeducators.
- Requires paraeducator training programs to adopt the paraeducator certification standards.

Hearing Date: 1/18/16

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

Paraeducators.

Paraeducators work under the supervision of teachers to provide various levels of support, including performing instructional duties, assisting with classroom management, and acting as translator. In Washington, there are no educational qualifications or licensure requirements for paraeducators. However, special education paraeducators must have the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the needs of students eligible for special education, and work under the supervision of a certificated teacher with a special education endorsement or a certificated

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educational staff associate. In addition, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has developed recommended core competencies and guidelines for paraeducators who work in education and related service programs for students with disabilities.

Paraeducator Standards Workgroup.

In 2014 the Legislature directed the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) to convene a workgroup to design program specific minimum employment standards for paraeducators, professional development and education opportunities that support the standards, a paraeducator career ladder, an articulated pathway for teacher preparation and certification, and teacher professional development on how to maximize the use of paraeducators in the classroom.

The workgroup submitted its first report to the Legislature in December 2014, recommending the following:

- appropriate minimum employment standards and professional development opportunities for paraeducators who work in English Language Learner (ELL) Programs, Transitional Bilingual Instruction Programs, federal Limited English Proficiency Programs, the Learning Assistance Program (LAP), and the federal Disadvantaged Program;
- a career ladder that encourages paraeducators to pursue advanced education and professional development;
- an articulated pathway for teacher preparation; and
- professional development for certificated employees that focuses on maximizing the success of paraeducators in the classroom.

On January 10, 2016 the workgroup submitted its final report to the Legislature, additionally recommending:

- foundational employment standards for basic education paraeducators, and specialized standards for paraeducators who work in ELL and Special Education Programs;
- a standard definition for paraeducator;
- a permanent paraeducator advisory board under OSPI;
- a paraeducator professional development system and certificate of completion for ELL and Special Education Endorsements;
- a cost effective statewide tracking system to support required coursework completed by paraeducators;
- certification renewal every five years that includes minimal cost professional development available via multiple pathways;
- a template for a paraeducator handbook for school districts;
- educator training that incorporates appropriate and effective use of paraeducators; and
- professional development for certificated employees that focuses on effective planning, collaboration, and supervision of paraeducators

Summary of Bill:

Minimum Employment Standards for Paraeducators.

Effective September 1, 2015, minimum employment standards for paraeducators working in the LAP, federal Disadvantaged Program, and ELL Programs require that the paraeducator:

- be at least age 18, hold a high school diploma or equivalent, and have received a passing grade on the Education Testing Service's Paraeducator Assessment;
- hold an associate of arts degree; or

- have earned a 72 quarter credits or 48 semester credits at an institution of higher education.

Paraeducator Board Established.

By September 1, 2015, a Paraeducator Board (Board) must be established to administer policies and rules for the preparation and certification of paraeducators who work in the LAP, the federal Disadvantaged Program, the ELL Programs, the paraeducator career ladder, or the pathway to teacher certification.

The board must be composed of a paraeducator, a teacher, and a principal, each appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction; a representative of the community and technical colleges appointed by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; a representative of the institutions of higher education appointed by the Washington Student Achievement Council; and a nonvoting facilitator appointed by the PESB. The PESB must also be the administrator of the Board.

Paraeducator Certification.

Subject to funding appropriated by the Legislature, the Board must distribute grants in the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years to districts that volunteer to field test the implementation of paraeducator certification and the ELL Endorsement for paraeducators. Starting September 1, 2017, all school districts must begin implementation of paraeducator certification for paraeducators working in the LAP, the federal Disadvantaged Program, and the ELL Programs. Paraeducators have three years to acquire certification.

The Board must adopt certification standards, including supporting instructional opportunities, demonstrating professionalism and ethical practices, supporting a safe and positive learning environment, and communicating effectively and participating in the team process.

The Board must also develop a training practicum and ensure that paraeducators have multiple methods to access certification training. The Board may establish paraeducator certification fees. The OSPI must provide the Board with funds necessary to administer the paraeducator certificates and endorsements.

English Language Learning Program Paraeducator Endorsement.

Beginning September 1, 2017, paraeducators who work in ELL Programs must acquire an ELL Paraeducator Endorsement within three years. The Board may adopt rules to implement the endorsement and training standards, and must ensure that training is made available to paraeducators via multiple means.

Advanced Paraeducator Endorsement.

By September 1, 2017, the Board must develop rules for an Advanced Paraeducator Endorsement, training modules, and a renewal process. The rules must include provisions that allow advanced paraeducator endorsement-holders to replace a teacher for a short time in districts that experience difficulty finding substitute teachers. The responsibilities of an advanced paraeducator are specified as mentoring or coaching other paraeducators, assisting in highly impacted classrooms, providing short-term substitution, and assisting in specific specialized instructional support and technology applications.

Paraeducator Endorsement and Certification Renewal.

Paraeducators must renew their certificate or necessary endorsements every five years by completing the clock hours determined by the Board. The Board may develop training modules and ensure that clock hour training is available via multiple means.

Teacher and Principal Training.

The PESB must design and implement a training program for teachers and principals on how to direct a paraeducator working with students and on how to supervise and evaluate paraeducators.

Paraeducator Certificate or Degree Requirements.

Paraeducator Associate of Arts degree, certificate, and apprenticeship programs must include training in the paraeducator certification standards adopted by the Board.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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