

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2698

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to paraeducators.

Brief Description: Concerning paraeducators.

Sponsors: Representatives Bergquist, Muri and Ortiz-Self.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/23/18, 1/25/18, 1/29/18 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Delays the implementation of the minimum employment requirements for paraeducators and the provision of the fundamental course of study to paraeducators.
- Makes changes to the Pipeline for Paraeducators Conditional Scholarship, for example the experience requirement is to be defined in rule rather than in statute.
- Authorizes appropriations to support the implementation of paraeducator certificate professional development.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Harris, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Hargrove, Johnson, Lovick, McCaslin, Ortiz-Self, Senn, Slatter, Steele, Stokesbary and Valdez.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

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.

A paraeducator means 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.

Minimum Employment Requirements.

Effective September 1, 2018, all paraeducators must meet the following minimum employment requirements. Paraeducators must:

1. be at least 18 years of age and hold a high school diploma or its equivalent; and
2. have received a passing grade on the paraeducator assessment; hold an Associate of Arts degree; have met minimum higher education credit requirements; or have completed a registered apprenticeship program.

Until September 1, 2018, only paraeducators who work in federal Title I, part A programs, which provide financial assistance to schools and districts with high numbers of children from low-income families, are required to meet minimum employment standards.

Fundamental Course of Study.

Subject to the appropriation of specific funds, beginning September 1, 2019, 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. Districts must use best efforts to provide the course before paraeducators begin to work with students and their families. At a minimum, districts must provide the course by the following deadline based on hire date:

- 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: for districts with 10,000 or more students, within four months of the date of hire; and for districts with fewer than 10,000 students, no later than September 1 of the following year.

General Paraeducator Certificate and 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 amounts are appropriated for school districts to provide the courses.

Subject Matter and Advanced Paraeducator Certificates.

The Paraeducator Board must adopt rules for paraeducator subject matter certificates in English language learner and special education, and an advanced paraeducator certificate. By September 1, 2018, the Paraeducator Board must approve, and develop if necessary, courses required to meet the paraeducator certificate requirements, where the courses are offered in a variety of means that will limit costs and improve access.

Pipeline for Paraeducators Conditional Scholarship.

The Pipeline for Paraeducators Conditional Scholarship (Pipeline CS), administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), provides financial assistance to paraeducators without a college degree who have at least three years of classroom experience. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) selects participants for the

program using specified statutory criteria. Participants are expected to complete an Associate of Arts degree in two years or less and become eligible for a teacher certificate with an endorsement in a subject matter shortage area through Route One of the Alternative Routes for Teacher Certification (Alternative Route) program. The annual award of up to \$4,000 maybe used for the cost of tuition, fees, and educational expenses and transportation for the Alternative Route program in which the participant is enrolled. The WSAC may adjust the annual award by the average rate of tuition and fee increases at the state community and technical colleges.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Minimum Employment Requirements.

Rather than requiring all paraeducators to meet minimum employment requirements by September 1, 2018, the following deadlines must be met:

- a person working as a paraeducator for a school district before or during the 2017-18 school year must meet the minimum employment requirements by the date of hire for the 2019-20 school year or any subsequent school year; and
- a person who has not previously worked as a paraeducator for a school district must meet the minimum employment requirements by the date of hire for the 2018-19 school year or any subsequent school year.

By October 1, 2018, a school district that does not receive funding under Title I must report to the Paraeducator Board with the following information about paraeducators hired by the school district for the 2018-19 school year, as of September 1, 2018: the total number of paraeducators; and the number who meet the minimum employment requirements.

Paraeducator Courses.

The deadlines for school districts to provide the fundamental course of study to paraeducators is delayed as follows: for paraeducators hired for the 2018-19 school year, school districts must provide the fundamental course of study by September 1, 2020; and for paraeducators not hired for the 2018-19 school year, but hired for the 2019-20 school year, school districts must provide the fundamental course of study by September 1, 2021. For paraeducators hired subsequent to the 2019-20 school year, school districts must provide the fundamental course of study by the deadlines based on hire date.

Paraeducators are only required to take, and districts are only required to provide, the fundamental course of study and the general courses on the state paraeducator standards of practice 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.

Pipeline for Paraeducators Conditional Scholarship.

Rather than requiring participants in the Pipeline CS to have at least three years of classroom experience, the PESB is directed to define the experience requirement. The limitation that participants in the Pipeline CS program have a plan to enroll in an Alternative Route One program is removed and is expanded to a plan to enroll in any Alternative Route program. The use of the Pipeline CS award for Alternative Route program purposes is removed

because participants are not part of the Alternative Route program at the time of participation in the Pipeline CS program. Finally, it is specified that the Pipeline CS "award may be adjusted annually," rather than specifying that "the Student Achievement Council may adjust the annual award."

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill makes the following changes to the original bill:

- changes implementation dates for the minimum paraeducator employment requirements and fundamental course of study by making reference to school years, rather than September 1 of particular years;
- phases in the implementation of the fundamental course of study in three years, rather than two years;
- specifies a date for the collection of data on paraeducators in non-Title I districts who have met minimum employment requirements;
- removes the limitation that participants in the Pipeline CS program plan to enroll in an Alternative Route One program;
- removes a limit on the use of the Pipeline CS award for alternative route program purposes, because the participant is not yet part of that program;
- specifies that the Pipeline CS "award may be adjusted annually," rather than that "the Student Achievement Council may adjust the annual award;"
- changes the recipient of the \$500,000 per fiscal year appropriation from the PESB to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in consultation with the Paraeducator Board; and
- specifies that paraeducators are only required to take, and districts are only required to implement, the fundamental course of study and the general courses on the state paraeducator standards of practice 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, rather than making these provisions subject to the appropriation of specific funds.

Appropriation: The sum of \$500,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the OSPI, in consultation with the Paraeducator Board, for fiscal years ending June 30, 2019 and June 30, 2020. The funds must be used to procure or develop professional development for paraeducator subject matter certificates in English language learner and special education, and the advanced paraeducator certificate, and must align courses with general paraeducator certificate professional development, including any necessary changes or edits to general paraeducator certificate online modules.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 30, 2018.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Paraeducators helped pass the 2017 bill; however, that bill caused unexpected challenges. The Paraeducator Board, created in 2016, developed the recommendations that are the basis for this bill. Existing paraeducators may not meet minimum requirements by the September 1, 2018 deadline. This bill will extend the deadlines by one year, so paraeducators can review, prepare, and be successful on the required test. Adequate support for paraeducators is important, including allowing more time for the development of paraeducator training modules and to implement the courses of study. Large school districts are concerned that they will not be able to provide the professional development required in the 2019-20 school year. This bill will delay this requirement to meet the needs of all districts. This bill makes changes to the entry requirements for the Pipeline CS, which will allow more paraeducators who want to become teachers to qualify for the scholarship.

The two \$500,000 appropriations for oversight and procurement of professional development should go to the OSPI because the duties in the appropriations align with the work this agency is currently doing by updating paraeducator modules. The OSPI is also working on professional learning for teachers and administrators as it relates to working with paraeducators. This will produce consistency and congruency with all types of professional learning.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Bergquist, prime sponsor; Beth Sigall, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Anthony Murietta, Teamsters Local 763; Cathy Smith, Professional Educator Standards Board–Paraeducator Board; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Cindy Rockholt, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Doug Nelson, Public School Employees and Service Employees International Union 1948.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.