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ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6260

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State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

**By** Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Wellman and C. Wilson; by request of Office of Financial Management)

READ FIRST TIME 03/02/26.

1 AN ACT Relating to efficiencies and programming changes in public  
2 education; amending RCW 28A.160.200, 28A.600.402, and 28A.300.072;  
3 and declaring an emergency.

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

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 28A.160.200 and 1995 1st sp.s. c 10 s 2 are each  
6 amended to read as follows:

7 (1) The superintendent shall develop a reimbursement schedule to  
8 pay districts for the cost of student transportation vehicles  
9 purchased after September 1, 1982. While it is the responsibility of  
10 each district to select and pay for each student transportation  
11 vehicle purchased by the district, each district shall be paid a sum  
12 based on the category of vehicle, anticipated lifetime of vehicles of  
13 this category, and state reimbursement rate for the category plus  
14 inflation as recognized by the reimbursement schedule established in  
15 this section as set by the superintendent. Categories and  
16 reimbursement rates of vehicles shall be those established under RCW  
17 28A.160.195. The accumulated value of the payments and the potential  
18 investment return thereon shall be designed to be equal to the  
19 replacement cost of the vehicle less its salvage value at the end of  
20 its anticipated lifetime. Beginning with buses that are scheduled for  
21 depreciation payments as of September 2025 and those qualifying for

1 payments after that date, the superintendent shall use a minimum  
2 anticipated lifetime of 120 months for category A buses and 180  
3 months for category C and D buses. The superintendent shall revise at  
4 least annually the reimbursement payments based on the current and  
5 anticipated future cost of comparable categories of transportation  
6 equipment. Reimbursements to school districts for approved  
7 transportation equipment shall be placed in a separate transportation  
8 vehicle fund established for each school district under RCW  
9 28A.160.130. However, educational service districts providing student  
10 transportation services pursuant to RCW 28A.310.180(4) and receiving  
11 moneys generated pursuant to this section shall establish and  
12 maintain a separate transportation vehicle account in the educational  
13 service district's general expense fund for the purposes and subject  
14 to the conditions under RCW 28A.160.130 and 28A.320.300.

15 (2) To the extent possible, districts shall operate vehicles  
16 acquired under this section not less than the number of years or  
17 useful lifetime now, or hereafter, assigned to the category of  
18 vehicles by the superintendent. School districts shall properly  
19 maintain the transportation equipment acquired under the provisions  
20 of this section, in accordance with rules established by the office  
21 of the superintendent of public instruction. If a district fails to  
22 follow generally accepted standards of maintenance and operation, the  
23 superintendent of public instruction shall penalize the district by  
24 deducting from future reimbursements under this section an amount  
25 equal to the original cost of the vehicle multiplied by the fraction  
26 of the useful lifetime or miles the vehicle failed to operate.

27 (3) The superintendent shall annually develop a depreciation  
28 schedule to recognize the cost of depreciation to districts  
29 contracting with private carriers for student transportation.  
30 Payments on this schedule shall be a straight line depreciation based  
31 on the original cost of the appropriate category of vehicle.

32 (4) If a school district is awarded a federal grant or rebate to  
33 purchase a student transportation vehicle, the superintendent shall  
34 adjust the district's reimbursement payments generated by that  
35 purchase by reducing the quote for that category of vehicles by the  
36 amount of the grant or rebate.

37 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28A.600.402 and 2023 c 350 s 1 are each amended to  
38 read as follows:

1 (1) Students participating in running start programs may be  
2 funded up to a combined maximum enrollment of 1.4 full-time  
3 equivalents in the 2025-26 school year and 1.2 full-time equivalents  
4 in subsequent years, including school district and institution of  
5 higher education enrollment.

6 (2) In calculating the combined full-time equivalents, the office  
7 of the superintendent of public instruction:

8 (a) Must adopt rules to fund the participating student's  
9 enrollment in running start courses provided by the institution of  
10 higher education during the summer academic term, up to a maximum of  
11 10 college credits per student per summer academic term; and

12 (b) May average the participating student's September through  
13 June enrollment to account for differences in the start and end dates  
14 for courses provided by the high school and the institution of higher  
15 education.

16 (3) Running start programs as a service delivery model and  
17 associated funding levels beyond 1.0 full-time equivalent per student  
18 are not part of the state's statutory program of basic education  
19 under chapter 28A.150 RCW.

20 (4) The office of the superintendent of public instruction, in  
21 consultation with the state board for community and technical  
22 colleges, the participating institutions of higher education, the  
23 student achievement council, and the education data center, must  
24 annually track, and report to the fiscal committees of the  
25 legislature, the combined full-time equivalent experience of students  
26 participating in running start programs, including course load  
27 analyses and enrollments by high school and participating  
28 institutions of higher education.

29 **Sec. 3.** RCW 28A.300.072 and 2025 c 342 s 1 are each amended to  
30 read as follows:

31 (1) The intent of the legislature is to continue and rename  
32 transitional kindergarten as the transition to kindergarten program  
33 and that the program be established in statute with the goal of  
34 assisting eligible children in need of additional preparation to be  
35 successful kindergarten students in the following school year. The  
36 transition to kindergarten program is not part of the state's  
37 statutory program of basic education under RCW 28A.150.200.

38 (2) (a) (i) The office of the superintendent of public instruction  
39 shall administer the transition to kindergarten program and shall

1 adopt rules under chapter 34.05 RCW for the administration of, the  
2 allocation of state funding for, and minimum standards and  
3 requirements for the transition to kindergarten program in accordance  
4 with this section.

5 (ii) When developing rules related to the allocation of state  
6 funding, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall  
7 establish criteria for prioritizing transition to kindergarten  
8 programs already operating in the prior school year and areas  
9 identified in the needs assessment required by subsection (3)(d) of  
10 this section as having the greatest need because of lack of  
11 availability of other early learning providers.

12 (b) School districts, charter schools (~~as allowed by subsection~~  
13 ~~(7) of this section~~), and state-tribal education compact schools  
14 operating a transition to kindergarten program shall adopt policies  
15 regarding eligibility, recruitment, and enrollment for this program  
16 that, at a minimum, meet the requirements of subsection (3) of this  
17 section.

18 (3) The rules adopted under subsection (2) of this section must  
19 include, at a minimum, the following requirements for school  
20 districts, charter schools (~~as allowed by subsection (7) of this~~  
21 ~~section~~), and state-tribal education compact schools operating a  
22 transition to kindergarten program:

23 (a) (i) A limitation on program enrollment to eligible children.  
24 Eligible children include only those who:

25 (A) Have been determined to benefit from additional preparation  
26 for kindergarten; and

27 (B) Are at least four years old by August 31st of the school year  
28 they enroll in the transition to kindergarten program;

29 (ii) A requirement, as practicable, for school districts, charter  
30 schools (~~as allowed by subsection (7) of this section~~), and state-  
31 tribal education compact schools to prioritize families with the  
32 lowest incomes and children most in need for additional preparation  
33 to be successful in kindergarten when enrolling eligible children in  
34 a transition to kindergarten program;

35 (iii) Access to the transition to kindergarten program does not  
36 constitute an individual entitlement for any particular child.

37 (b) Except for children who have been excused from participation  
38 by their parents or legal guardians, a requirement that the  
39 Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills as established  
40 by RCW 28A.655.080 be administered to all eligible children enrolled

1 in a transition to kindergarten program at the beginning of the  
2 child's enrollment in the program and at least one more time during  
3 the school year((~~-~~));

4 (c) A requirement that all eligible children enrolled in a  
5 transition to kindergarten program be assigned a statewide student  
6 identifier and that the transition to kindergarten program be  
7 considered a separate class or course for the purposes of data  
8 reporting requirements in RCW 28A.320.175((~~-~~));

9 (d) A requirement that a local child care and early learning  
10 needs assessment is conducted before beginning or expanding a  
11 transition to kindergarten program that considers the existing  
12 availability and affordability of early learning providers, such as  
13 the early childhood education and assistance programs, head start  
14 programs, and licensed child care centers and family home providers  
15 in the region. Data available through the regionalized data dashboard  
16 maintained by the department of children, youth, and families or any  
17 other appropriate sources may be used to inform the needs assessment  
18 required by this subsection((~~-~~));

19 (e) (i) A requirement that school districts, charter schools (~~(as~~  
20 ~~allowed by subsection (7) of this section)~~), and state-tribal  
21 education compact schools adhere to guidelines, as developed by the  
22 office of the superintendent of public instruction, related to:

23 (A) Best practices for site readiness of facilities that are used  
24 for the program;

25 (B) Developmentally appropriate curricula designed to assist in  
26 maintaining high quality programs; and

27 (C) Professional development opportunities((~~-~~));

28 (ii) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must  
29 develop a process for conducting site visits of any school district,  
30 charter school (~~(as allowed by subsection (7) of this section)~~), or  
31 state-tribal education compact school operating a transition to  
32 kindergarten program and provide feedback on elements listed in this  
33 subsection (3) (e) ((~~-~~));

34 (f) (~~(A prohibition on charging tuition or other fees to state-~~  
35 ~~funded eligible children for enrollment in a transition to~~  
36 ~~kindergarten program.)~~ Authorization to charge tuition or sliding  
37 scale fees for enrollment in a transition to kindergarten program,  
38 except to children with disabilities entitled to a free appropriate  
39 public education in accordance with the federal individuals with  
40 disabilities education act and chapter 28A.155 RCW; and

1 (g) A prohibition on establishing a policy of excluding an  
2 eligible child due only to the presence of a disability.

3 (4) (a) The office of the superintendent of public instruction, in  
4 collaboration with the department of children, youth, and families,  
5 shall develop statewide coordinated eligibility, recruitment,  
6 enrollment, and selection best practices and provide technical  
7 assistance to those implementing a transition to kindergarten program  
8 to support connections with local early learning providers.

9 (b) School districts, charter schools (~~(as allowed by subsection~~  
10 ~~(7) of this section)~~), and state-tribal education compact schools  
11 must consider the best practices developed under this subsection (4)  
12 when adopting the policies required under subsection (2) (b) of this  
13 section.

14 (5) Nothing in this section prohibits school districts, charter  
15 schools (~~(as allowed by subsection (7) of this section)~~), and state-  
16 tribal education compact schools from blending or collocating a  
17 transition to kindergarten program with other early learning  
18 programs.

19 (6) (a) Funding for the transition to kindergarten program (~~(must~~  
20 ~~be)~~) is limited to the amounts provided in the omnibus appropriations  
21 act and must be allocated to school districts, charter schools, and  
22 state-tribal education compact schools based on the prioritized  
23 criteria developed by the office of the superintendent of public  
24 instruction under subsection (2) (a) (ii) of this section.

25 (b) Allocations for the transition to kindergarten program are  
26 based on the following formulas:

27 (i) The distribution formula established under RCW 28A.150.260  
28 (4) (a), (5), (6), (8), and (10) (a) and (b), calculated using the  
29 actual number of annual average full-time equivalent eligible  
30 children enrolled in the program (~~(. A transition to kindergarten~~  
31 ~~child must be counted as a kindergarten student for purposes of the~~  
32 ~~funding calculations referenced in this subsection, but must be~~  
33 ~~reported separately.)~~); and

34 (ii) The distribution formula developed in RCW 28A.160.150  
35 through 28A.160.192, calculated using reported ridership for eligible  
36 children enrolled in the program.

37 (b) (~~Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, the annual average~~  
38 ~~full-time equivalent eligible children enrolled in the program funded~~  
39 ~~in (a) of this subsection may not exceed the state-funded annual~~  
40 ~~average full-time equivalent specified in the omnibus appropriations~~

1 ~~act. During the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years, the office of the~~  
2 ~~superintendent of public instruction must prioritize funding for~~  
3 ~~programs funded under (a) of this subsection that operated during the~~  
4 ~~2024-25 school year)) A transition to kindergarten child must be~~  
5 ~~counted as a kindergarten student for purposes of the funding~~  
6 ~~calculations referenced in this subsection and for purposes of~~  
7 ~~calculating special education funding under RCW 28A.150.390(2)(b),~~  
8 ~~but children enrolled in this program must be reported separately.~~

9 (c) Funding provided for the transition to kindergarten program  
10 is not part of the state's statutory program of basic education under  
11 RCW 28A.150.200 and must be expended only for the support of  
12 operating a transition to kindergarten program.

13 (~~((7) Charter schools authorized under RCW 28A.710.080(2) are~~  
14 ~~immediately permitted to operate a transition to kindergarten program~~  
15 ~~under this section. Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, any~~  
16 ~~charter school authorized under RCW 28A.710.080 (1) or (2) is~~  
17 ~~permitted to operate a transition to kindergarten program under this~~  
18 ~~section.))~~

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** This act is necessary for the immediate  
20 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of  
21 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes  
22 effect immediately.

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