
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6260

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 (a) Must adopt rules to fund the participating student's
2 enrollment in running start courses provided by the institution of
3 higher education during the summer academic term, up to a maximum of
4 10 college credits per student per summer academic term; and

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

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

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

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

24 (1) The intent of the legislature is to continue and rename
25 transitional kindergarten as the transition to kindergarten program
26 and that the program be established in statute with the goal of
27 assisting eligible children in need of additional preparation to be
28 successful kindergarten students in the following school year. The
29 transition to kindergarten program is not part of the state's
30 statutory program of basic education under RCW 28A.150.200.

31 (2) (a) (i) The office of the superintendent of public instruction
32 shall administer the transition to kindergarten program and shall
33 adopt rules under chapter 34.05 RCW for the administration of, the
34 allocation of state funding for, and minimum standards and
35 requirements for the transition to kindergarten program in accordance
36 with this section.

37 (ii) When developing rules related to the allocation of state
38 funding, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall
39 establish criteria for prioritizing transition to kindergarten

1 programs already operating in the prior school year and areas
2 identified in the needs assessment required by subsection (3)(d) of
3 this section as having the greatest need because of lack of
4 availability of other early learning providers.

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

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

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

18 (A) Have been determined to benefit from additional preparation
19 for kindergarten; and

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

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

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

30 (b) Except for children who have been excused from participation
31 by their parents or legal guardians, a requirement that the
32 Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills as established
33 by RCW 28A.655.080 be administered to all eligible children enrolled
34 in a transition to kindergarten program at the beginning of the
35 child's enrollment in the program and at least one more time during
36 the school year(~~(-)~~);

37 (c) A requirement that all eligible children enrolled in a
38 transition to kindergarten program be assigned a statewide student
39 identifier and that the transition to kindergarten program be

1 considered a separate class or course for the purposes of data
2 reporting requirements in RCW 28A.320.175(~~(7)~~);

3 (d) A requirement that a local child care and early learning
4 needs assessment is conducted before beginning or expanding a
5 transition to kindergarten program that considers the existing
6 availability and affordability of early learning providers, such as
7 the early childhood education and assistance programs, head start
8 programs, and licensed child care centers and family home providers
9 in the region. Data available through the regionalized data dashboard
10 maintained by the department of children, youth, and families or any
11 other appropriate sources may be used to inform the needs assessment
12 required by this subsection(~~(7)~~);

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

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

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

21 (C) Professional development opportunities(~~(7)~~);

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

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

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

37 (4) (a) The office of the superintendent of public instruction, in
38 collaboration with the department of children, youth, and families,
39 shall develop statewide coordinated eligibility, recruitment,
40 enrollment, and selection best practices and provide technical

1 assistance to those implementing a transition to kindergarten program
2 to support connections with local early learning providers.

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

8 (5) Nothing in this section prohibits school districts, charter
9 schools (~~(as allowed by subsection (7) of this section)~~), and state-
10 tribal education compact schools from blending or colocating a
11 transition to kindergarten program with other early learning
12 programs.

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

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

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

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

31 (b) (~~(Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, the annual average~~
32 ~~full-time equivalent eligible children enrolled in the program funded~~
33 ~~in (a) of this subsection may not exceed the state-funded annual~~
34 ~~average full-time equivalent specified in the omnibus appropriations~~
35 ~~act. During the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years, the office of the~~
36 ~~superintendent of public instruction must prioritize funding for~~
37 ~~programs funded under (a) of this subsection that operated during the~~
38 ~~2024-25 school year)~~) A transition to kindergarten child must be
39 counted as a kindergarten student for purposes of the funding
40 calculations referenced in this subsection and for purposes of

1 calculating special education funding under RCW 28A.150.390(2)(b),
2 but children enrolled in this program must be reported separately.

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

7 ~~((7) Charter schools authorized under RCW 28A.710.080(2) are~~
8 ~~immediately permitted to operate a transition to kindergarten program~~
9 ~~under this section. Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, any~~
10 ~~charter school authorized under RCW 28A.710.080 (1) or (2) is~~
11 ~~permitted to operate a transition to kindergarten program under this~~
12 ~~section.))~~

13 NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. This act is necessary for the immediate
14 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of
15 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes
16 effect immediately.

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