

# PARAEDUCATOR PILOT PROGRAM

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FINAL REPORT


NOVEMBER 2019

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# Table of Contents

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Executive summary	2
Introduction	3
Background	3
The Paraeducator Certificate Program	3
Laws and rules	4
Paraeducator pilot	5
Authorizing language	5
Selection of grantees	5
Legislated outcomes of the pilot	7
Issaquah School District	8
Longview School District	9
Riverside School District	10
Yakima School District	11
NEWESD 101	12
NW ESD 189	13
Recommendations from the pilot	14
Looking ahead	15
Conclusion	16
Acknowledgements	17
Paraeducator Board mission and vision	18
Paraeducator Board staff	18
Appendices	19



# Executive Summary

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The Paraeducator Certificate Program was established by the Legislature to provide consistent statewide professional development training to instructional paraeducators to support the successful academic outcomes of Washington State students. If funded by the Legislature, school districts are required to provide annual training to meet the requirements of the program. For the 2019-20 school year, funding was provided by the Legislature for two, out of four, days for training on the Fundamental Course of Study, which school districts are currently offering.

Between August 2018 and July 2019, four school districts and two Educational Service Districts piloted specific training elements of the certificate program to over 200 paraeducators. Learnings from the pilot sites support the position that districts can successfully deliver the required training. Pilot grantees found the flexibility to incorporate district policy and instructional practice to meet the requirements of the program. Furthermore, paraeducators expressed their gratitude after finally receiving training that further developed their profession and improved their instructional support for students.

However, moving forward, school districts do require assistance to implement the training successfully. The Paraeducator Board recommends the following to the Legislature:

1. Fully fund the implementation of the Paraeducator Certificate Program - four days of training - for school districts to meet the requirements of the program;
2. Allow school districts the entire school year to provide training to paraeducators, regardless of their date of hire; and
3. Provide additional funding to cover the district costs to deliver and administer the program.

# Introduction

## Background

Educators in K-12 schools are responsible for addressing the diverse needs of students in the classroom. Paraeducators provide frontline services that range from general classroom support to working with learners who have special needs. Despite the value paraeducators bring to this work, they typically do not receive the training needed to support sustainable success in the complex aspects of their role.

To address the need for training, Substitute Senate Bill 6129 (2014) directed the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) to convene a paraeducator workgroup. The Legislature charged the workgroup with recommending new paraeducator standards of practice, professional and educational development, and establishing a career ladder to teacher certification.

During their review of Washington’s paraeducator training, the workgroup found that “there are discrepancies between policies, regulatory procedures, job descriptions, teacher expectations, and learner needs... Training options for paraeducators are rarely standardized or competency-based, usually piecemeal, and not necessarily based on accurate assessments of the evolving roles of... paraeducators”<sup>1</sup>.

The recommendations from the workgroup led to the passing of Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1115 (2017), which established paraeducator minimum employment requirements, standards of practice, the Paraeducator Board (administered by the Professional Educator Standards Board), and the certificate program. The program addresses the lack of consistent training and standardizes paraeducator professional development training in Washington State.

To prepare for the implementation of the certificate program, the Washington Legislature requested the Paraeducator Board to administer a pilot of the program. The goal of the pilot was to test the implementation of required training during the 2018-19 school year. The pilot focused on the new standards of practice and certificates. In addition to assessing the training, the pilot collected feedback from district administrators and paraeducators on their experience of the training.

The results of the pilot inform broader knowledge and recommendations for the effective implementation of the paraeducator standards of practice, professional development training, and paraeducator career development.

## The Paraeducator Certificate Program

Four components make the certificate program (Appendix 1).

### Fundamental Course of Study

The training begins with a 28-hour (four day) Fundamental Course of Study (FCS); a course focused on the paraeducator standards of practice, covering 12 different units (Appendix 2). If funded by the Legislature, school districts must provide the FCS to paraeducators before the start of school or shortly after a paraeducator’s date of hire.

To assist school districts with the implementation of the FCS, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) developed the online course “[Paraeducators: what we do matters](#)” (Appendix 4). Districts may access this free resource to provide online training on the FCS. Districts interested in exploring this option must review the crosswalk between the FCS and the online course, and provide supplemental training hours to satisfy the FCS unit requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> K-12 Education Paraeducator Development (2015), pg. 5, <http://bit.ly/ParaWorkGroupReport>

## General Paraeducator Certificate

Within three years following the completion of the FCS, and if funded by the Legislature, a paraeducator is required to complete an additional 70 hours of training to earn the general certificate. Training requirements to attain this certificate are broadly defined. This allows districts and paraeducators the flexibility to pursue tailored training that will best serve the instructional practice of the paraeducator. An excellent resource for districts to consider as training for their paraeducators is professional development already provided to teachers.

## Subject Matter Certificates

A paraeducator may choose to attain a Subject Matter Certificate by completing 20 hours of training in the subject of the certificate. There are two Subject Matter Certificates: English Language Learner (ELL) and Special Education. These certificates expire after five years of attainment, which may be renewed, and are not prerequisites for employment in any program. Once attained, a paraeducator can use their Subject Matter Certificate to help meet the requirements of the general certificate. Similar to the FCS, the Subject Matter Certificates require the paraeducator to meet specific learning objectives and outcomes (Appendix 4).

To assist paraeducators to meet the requirements of the Subject Matter Certificates, the PESB developed [two free online courses](#) (Appendix 4). After completing these courses, paraeducators are considered to have met the obligation of the certificate, and may request attainment through e-Certification.

“

HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR  
ISSAQUAH SCHOOL DISTRICT

*When we have more competent, more confident paraprofessionals - that is just going to translate to a more positive and effective learning environment for our students.*

”

## Advanced Paraeducator Certificate

Once a paraeducator attains the general certificate, a paraeducator may complete training to meet the requirements of the advanced certificate. This certificate requires an additional 75 hours of advanced professional development. The duties of an advanced paraeducator include: assisting in highly-impacted classrooms, supporting specialized instruction, mentoring other paraeducators, and acting as a short-term emergency substitute teacher (a district is still required to follow the rules concerning short-term emergency substitute teachers). The certificate expires after five years, which may be renewed, and it is not a prerequisite for employment.

## Laws and rules

[Chapter 28A.413 RCW](#) and [Title 179 WAC](#) are the relevant laws and rules associated with this program. The RCW established the paraeducator minimum employment requirements, the standards of practice for paraeducators, the Paraeducator Board, and the Paraeducator Certificate Program. The Paraeducator Board defines the RCW in Title 179 WAC.

“

PARAEDUCATOR  
NW ESD 189

*After completing the ELL certificate professional development course, I have a better understanding of the Standards of Practice and have resources readily available that I can refer back to.*

”



# Paraeducator pilot

## Authorizing language

Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1115 authorized the paraeducator pilot and the following requirements on the Paraeducator Board ([RCW 28A.413.095](#)):

1. By September 1, 2018, and subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the board will distribute grants to a diverse set of school districts that volunteer to pilot the state paraeducator standards of practice, the paraeducator certificates, and the courses described in this chapter.
2. By September 1, 2019, the volunteer districts must report to the board the outcomes of the pilot and recommendations for implementing the paraeducator standards of practice, paraeducator certificates, and courses statewide. The outcomes reported must include:
  - a. An analysis of the costs to the district to implement the state standards of practice by making available the required four-day fundamental course of study;
  - b. The number of paraeducators who completed the course of study in the state standards of practice;
  - c. The number of paraeducators who earned an advanced paraeducator certificate, or a special education or English language learner certificate;
  - d. Any cost to the district and the paraeducator to earn a certificate; and
  - e. The impact on the size and assignment of the paraeducator workforce as a result of the pilot.

3. By November 1, 2019, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the board must submit a report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature that summarizes the outcomes of the pilots, and recommend any statutory changes necessary to improve the statewide standards of practice, paraeducator certificate requirements, and courses of study.

## Selection of grantees

In March 2018, the Paraeducator Board began accepting applications from school districts and Educational Service Districts (ESDs) to pilot the FCS, in addition to a certificate from the program.

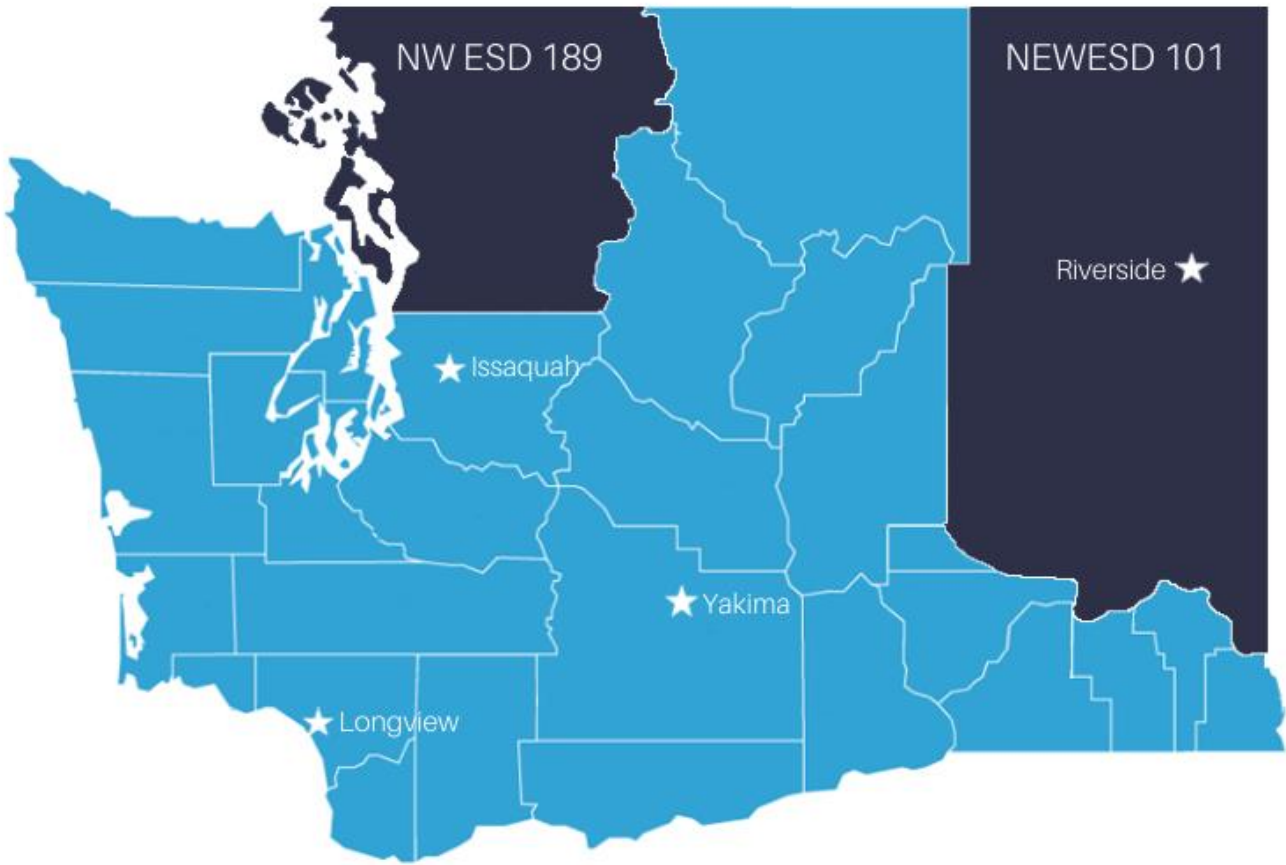
School districts and ESDs interested in participating in the pilot agreed to the following requirements:

- Train a minimum of 25 paraeducators;
- Complete training on the FCS to their paraeducators;
- Use the online course “Paraeducators: what we do matters” in their instruction of the FCS;
- Complete training on at least one of the following: ELL Subject Matter Certificate, Special Education Subject Matter Certificate, or 20 hours of the General Paraeducator Certificate;
- Participate in a pilot workgroup, composed of pilot grant awardees;
- Assist their paraeducators with listing the completion of the FCS and their certificate on e-Certification (Washington State’s certificate/certification online tracking tool administered by OSPI’s Certification Office).

Though not required, applicants were encouraged to leverage their collective bargaining agreements for time to provide professional development (e.g., early release and conference days).

By June 2019, six grantees were selected to pilot the program, with an average award totaling \$30,000:

- Issaquah School District
- Longview School District
- Riverside School District
- Yakima School District
- NEWESD 101 (paraeducators from Freeman, Deer Park, Colville, and Liberty School Districts participated)
- NW ESD 189 (paraeducators from Mt. Vernon, Stanwood, and Burlington-Edison School Districts and from NW ESD 189 participated)



# Legislated outcomes of the pilot

What follows is an overview of each pilot site and the results from their training. Each review includes the district's profile, their approach to the pilot, and responses to the following requested outcomes by the Legislature:

## Code Outcome

- A** The number of paraeducators who started the pilot.
- B** Level of funding awarded to the district/ESD and level of funding exercised.
- C** An analysis of the costs to the district to implement the state standards of practice by making available the required four-day fundamental course of study.
- D** The number of paraeducators who completed the course of study in the state standards of practice.
- E** The number of paraeducators who earned an Advanced Paraeducator Certificate, or a Special Education or ELL Subject Matter Certificate.
- F** Any cost to the district and the paraeducator to earn a certificate.

## Three notes:

1. Regarding "outcome E": Given the requirements of the Paraeducator Certificate Program, no pilot provided training on the Advanced Paraeducator Certificate.
2. Regarding "outcome F": in addition to the outcomes listed for each grantee, each pilot experienced costs associated with the grant administration of this pilot and the development of district-specific training that were not allocated to the pilot funds.
3. Regarding the following Legislative outcome request: "the impact on the size and assignment of the paraeducator workforce as a result of the pilot". Each pilot had the same response to this prompt: As the pilot was not mandatory to all paraeducators in the district, the district did not see an impact on the size and assignment of its workforce. All paraeducators found the training beneficial for supporting their role as instructional assistants.

“

DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION  
SPOKANE SCHOOL DISTRICT

*This is going to give them more tools to do their job. Hopefully, after everyone is caught up to speed, they will feel more successful.*

”



## Overview

Issaquah School District trained their paraeducators on the FCS between September and December 2018. They completed in-person training to meet the requirements of the Special Education Subject Matter Certificate between December 2018 and May 2019. Issaquah completed the training during early release days, conference days, and non-contracted days. The district relied entirely on instructors from within the district to provide training.

## Outcomes

- A 32 paraeducators started the pilot.
- B \$28,000 was awarded, and a total of \$21,815.06 was used.
- C The majority of the funds were spent on paraeducator wages and benefits for attending training outside contracted time (35 of 48 hours). The remaining funds were spent on supplies, including printing and spiral binding the “Paraeducators: what we do matters” journal to help facilitate learning.
- D 29 paraeducators completed training on the FCS.
- E 27 paraeducators earned the Special Education Subject Matter Certificate.
- F The largest additional non-direct cost to implement the pilot was the salary and benefits of a new professional learning coach. This position supported the pilot, as well as provided onboarding and peer coaching to new paraeducators. The school district found this role highly beneficial to implementing the program and has now hired two professional learning coaches.

## Important comments

### **Custom training for paraeducators is possible and recommended**

Local district experts were the primary instructors for the Issaquah School District, and aligned required FCS learning objectives with school district policies and staff responsibilities. Paraeducators responded positively to the customized nature of the training. However, paraeducators noted that the content did overlap between presenters. As such, districts must coordinate their training and its content strategically.

### **Available time to train paraeducators is limited**

Finding time to provide training to paraeducators within their collective bargaining agreement is a challenge. Additionally, paraeducators absent for the first in-person training day were required to make up the instruction later, if available. The human resources director conducted the make-up training as opposed to the district trainers. As a result, these paraeducators missed the benefits of the subject matter experts and learning in a cohort of their peers.

### **Special Education Subject Matter Certificate training was highly valuable and necessary**

Paraeducators believed the Special Education Subject Matter Certificate was relevant and gave them new insights into what and why specific support is required in the classroom. Learning more about behavior support strategies is also necessary to ensure paraeducators are prepared for meeting various student needs.

## Overview

Longview School District trained their paraeducators on the FCS with in-person and online instruction between August 2018 and January 2019. They completed in-person and online instruction to meet the requirements of the Special Education Subject Matter Certificate between January and June 2019. Along with in-district trainers, the district partnered with Lower Columbia College to provide a blended approach to training on the FCS and Special Education Subject Matter Certificate.

## Outcomes

- A 30 paraeducators started the pilot.
- B \$28,000 was awarded, and a total of \$26,037.19 was exercised.
- C The majority of the funds were spent on paraeducator wages and benefits for attending training. The remaining funds were allocated to Lower Columbia College (\$1,500).
- D 27 paraeducators completed training on the FCS.
- E 27 paraeducators earned the Special Education Subject Matter Certificate.
- F The following additional costs were not covered by the funds awarded to Longview: facility rental, travel, instructional materials and instruction from hired contractors.

## Important comments

### **The district needs to be responsible for providing training on specific district rules and policies**

Longview partnered with Lower Columbia College to provide training on the pilot. By the end of the pilot, the college reported that moving forward it will be best for training on Special Education to be offered by district experts. Furthermore, training offered by district personnel increased the buy-in from paraeducators, who received training on district policy with direct application for special education programs.

### **Leverage current contracted time**

To minimize the impact of the training costs, it is recommended for districts to use any contracted days to hold training (e.g., early-release, conference, and in-service days).

### **Effective large group full-day training is challenging to implement and so is completing online training**

Longview took the initial approach to train all paraeducators in the district (over 250) on the new standards of practice at once, in an auditorium, to create a shared foundation and understanding. However, due to the nature of large-scale training, engagement and participation were limited. It is also challenging to determine precisely how participants will apply the material taught. Moving forward, the district suggests training be provided in small groups ranging from 25-35. In addition, online training needs to have a facilitator to provide direct and immediate feedback to participants during online discussion, and to provide support to paraeducators who are not familiar with this mode of learning.

## Overview

Riverside School District trained their paraeducators on the FCS with in-person instruction between November 2018 and February 2019 and provided in-person instruction to meet the requirements of the General Paraeducator Certificate (up to 20 hours) by July 2019. Riverside completed the training by using contracted time. Riverside contracted with the same instructor to provide training on all 48 hours of the pilot. Of note, Riverside trained 95% of their instructional paraeducators during the pilot.

## Outcomes

- A 39 paraeducators started the pilot.
- B \$25,135 was awarded, and a total of \$20,885.14 was exercised.
- C Funds were expended to reimburse the district for the wages and benefits of the instructor and paraeducators for the training of the General Paraeducator Certificate. Training materials were also expended from the pilot award.
- D 39 paraeducators completed training on the FCS.
- E 39 paraeducators completed 20 hours of the General Paraeducator Certificate.
- F There were no additional costs.

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PARAEDUCATOR  
RIVERSIDE SCHOOL DISTRICT

*This training will support our children by better equipping us to be better helpers to them so that we can serve them better.*

”

## Important comments

### For the general certificate, ask paraeducators what they need to learn

Riverside School District engaged their paraeducators through a survey prior to training on the general certificate. The survey asked the paraeducators to determine the content they believed would be the most valuable to improving their support for students. Along with district-directed learning objectives, twenty hours of training was developed based on the paraeducators feedback. As a result, paraeducators felt buy-in from their administration on their learning requirements.

### Clock hours are new to paraeducators

Paraeducators require more information from district leadership on the importance of clock hours and its connection to the certificate program. Administrators need to inform and provide support to paraeducators as they navigate the e-Certification system for the first time.

### Involve the people who supervise paraeducators

Principals are responsible for supervising paraeducators. During paraeducator training, involve principals to allow for increased teamwork and to better align the content to specific building standards.

### Schedule sooner than later and communicate consistently

The certificate program requires new paraeducator training for school districts, a first for the state. For best outcomes, paraeducators require consistent communication and advance notice of scheduled training to improve attendance and limit make-up sessions.

## Overview

Yakima School District trained their paraeducators on the FCS in August 2018, in-person and before the start of school. The district met the requirements of the Special Education and ELL Subject Matter Certificates during the beginning of winter break in December 2018 and June 2019. The pilot took place during non-contract days. Along with district instructors, the district partnered with Washington Education Association (WEA) to provide the majority of training.

## Outcomes

- A** 36 paraeducators started the pilot.
- B** \$34,756 was awarded, and a total of \$32,233.70 was exercised.
- C** The majority of the funds were spent on paraeducator wages and benefits for attending training. The remaining funds were used to feed the paraeducators and trainers during training days, and to cover trainer fees and materials.
- D** 36 paraeducators completed training on the FCS.
- E** 30 paraeducators earned the ELL Subject Matter Certificate and eight earned the Special Education Subject Matter Certificate (two paraeducators earned both).
- F** WEA donated more than 40 hours of training time from their professional development leaders to the district. Had the district been responsible for covering these costs, their expenses would have been much higher.

## Important comments

### Partnerships can be successful

Yakima School District partnered with the Yakima Educator Association and WEA to provide training on the FCS and Subject Matter Certificates. Paraeducators reported the training content was beneficial and added value to their jobs as paraeducators. Partnering with the associations provided credibility and buy-in to the pilot training.

### The FCS training is relevant

Paraeducators reported that the training provided a foundation to the underpinnings of race, culture, and poverty that students bring to school, and how having sensitivity and understanding for their needs adjusts instructional support. The paraeducators left the training feeling valued and more aligned with the educator team.

### Consecutive days of training is possible, but not advisable

Providing consecutive days of training can be overwhelming for new paraeducators. A recommended approach is to spread out the days of training within a school year, which allows time for reflection and application of the material.

### ELL training is essential to provide language acquisition support for students

The ELL Subject Matter Certificate is vital if districts are to provide the best possible outcomes for all learners. Yakima School District provided paraeducators with 20 hours of rigorous training that covered language acquisition skills necessary to support second language learners.

# NEWESD 101

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## Overview

NEWESD 101 trained their paraeducators on the FCS entirely online between September 2018 and January 2019. Paraeducators were required to complete the training outside of their contracted time. The ESD partnered with a professor from the University of Washington to administer and facilitate discussion of the online course. Unfortunately, the ESD was unable to provide training on the Special Education Subject Matter Certificate as anticipated.

## Outcomes

- A** 48 paraeducators from Freeman, Deer Park, Colville, and Liberty School Districts participated in the pilot.
- B** \$37,000 was awarded, and a total of \$14,054.82 was exercised.
- C** The majority of the funds were allocated to a contract between the ESD and a consultant from the University of Washington to provide online instruction on the FCS. Some of the funds were allocated to pay the wages and benefits of the paraeducators.
- D** 26 paraeducators completed training on the FCS.
- E** No paraeducators earned the Special Education Subject Matter Certificate.
- F** There were no additional costs to the districts with the exception of Deer Park. The district's collective bargaining agreement required professional development to be covered by the district. Their cost was \$2,565.67, \$574.90 for benefits.

## Important comments

### Entirely online is not effective

Upon completion of the pilot, the ESD is not recommending an online approach to train paraeducators on the FCS. The ESD recommends in-person training to maximize the benefits of face-to-face instruction and ensure the application of learning objectives.

### Back-up trainers are critical

Arranging for a back-up instructor is necessary. None of the paraeducators completed the Special Education Subject Matter Certificate because the sole instructor was unavailable due to sudden illness.

“

PARAEDUCATOR  
STEILACOOM HISTORICAL  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

*Every child needs a cheerleader, someone they can trust and someone who helps them succeed.*

”



## Overview

NW ESD 189 trained their paraeducators on the FCS with in-person and online instruction between September 2018 and January 2019. They completed in-person and online instruction to meet the requirements of the Special Education and ELL Subject Matter Certificates between January and June 2019. The ESD completed the training with contracted time, and partnered with district trainers to provide the training.

## Outcomes

- A** 27 paraeducators from Mt. Vernon, Stanwood, and Burlington-Edison School Districts and from NW ESD 189 participated in the pilot.
- B** \$28,000 was awarded, and a total of \$26,283.08 was exercised.
- C** The majority of the funds were allocated to a contract between the ESD and a consultant from the University of Washington to provide in-person training on the FCS and for two teachers on special assignment to train on the Subject Matter Certificates. Paraeducators were covered by their district's collective bargaining agreements.
- D** 27 paraeducators completed training on the FCS.
- E** 17 paraeducators earned the Special Education Subject Matter Certificate and 9 earned the ELL Subject Matter Certificate.
- F** The costs are the same as stated in "outcome C".

## Important comments

### Managing several districts with different bargaining agreements is a challenge

As a coalition, NW ESD 189 is working to bring together several districts with distinct collective bargaining agreements, rules, and capacity (e.g., coordinating release time and finding substitutes). The ESD successfully worked with district leaders to train paraeducators during the pilot. However, coordinating different agreements is a challenge that can be compounded by a paraeducator's absence on a training day. Along with financial support, flexibility on when and how the training is provided is required for successful implementation of the program.

### Using different online software is a challenge

The ESD found that using two online learning platforms was confusing to some paraeducators. Clear communication on how to use various online tools is critical for a paraeducator to succeed in online training. Acknowledging technology limitations is critical when introducing paraeducators to the e-Certification system.

### A blended approach to training can work

Paraeducators met the Special Education Subject Matter Certificate by attending 15 hours of face-to-face instruction, and completing five hours of online assignments. Paraeducators reported that the training was very relevant and helpful, even for the more experienced individuals. Paraeducators recommended that training is more powerful when delivered in small groups.

### Content from the Special Education and ELL Subject Matter Certificates was highly valuable and relevant

Paraeducators reported that this training was extremely appropriate and that learning from content experts allowed them to understand and apply targeted strategies to increase their support of student needs.

# Recommendations from the pilot

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## **Leverage current training**

Districts should review established training against the requirements of the FCS and General Paraeducator Certificate. Districts can leverage professional development provided to teachers, which can be restructured for paraeducators, guaranteeing a unified background of learning.

## **Utilize partnerships to develop the best training for paraeducators**

The district is responsible for providing the training to their paraeducators. However, district leaders are encouraged to work with partners to provide the training if resources are limited. Along with leveraging current training programs at the district level, partners could include unions, community colleges, ESDs, and more.

## **Delivery of training: in-person and small group**

School district leaders need to research the best approaches to delivering the training. In the pilot, grantees utilized different methods, which included 100% online, blended learning, and in-person only. Each plan has its benefits and drawbacks, and districts need to determine the best way to train their paraeducators. In reviewing the outcomes of the pilot, the Board recommends providing the FCS through small group and in-person training to allow for collaborative learning. The online course, “Paraeducators: what we do matters”, is a great tool, but the Board recommends using the online course as supplemental material during in-person training.

## **Leverage local release time to ensure training meets district and paraeducator needs**

Consider how the training will affect paraeducator collective bargaining agreements and what changes must take place for the successful implementation of the program. The Paraeducator Board recommends school districts and unions review the release time to provide training.

## **Develop local policies to support the certificate program**

Districts should pass policies at the school board level to support the certificate program. Leaders must keep into consideration that the program encompasses more than just the FCS, which is a stepping-stone to four professional development certificates. Training will be an ongoing process and should be considered an ongoing investment in a paraeducator’s professional development.

## **Consistent and ongoing communication**

The Paraeducator Certificate Program is a new requirement in Washington. In the current and forthcoming school years, this program will train over 27,000 paraeducators. District leaders need to communicate to their paraeducators how training will be delivered, what it entails, and why it is crucial. Furthermore, leaders must communicate the availability of professional development to all roles in the educator team (e.g., paraeducators, teachers, principals, human resource personnel, superintendents, and more) (Appendix 4).

## **Prepare for the use of e-Certification**

To keep track of training accomplished and certificates attained, paraeducators will utilize the same system as other Washington educators. The e-Certification system will track the progress of paraeducators throughout the certificate program. As a new tool for paraeducators, school districts must train paraeducators on how to navigate the online portal.



School districts across the state are implementing the first 14 hours of training on the FCS during the 2019-20 school year. Due to the lessons learned during the pilot, school districts are finding success in the implementation of the certificate program. However, there are opportunities for improvement. During October 2019, PESB staff contacted over 70 school districts regarding the implementation of the FCS. In looking to the future of the program, districts provided the following repeated requests for change.

“

TEACHER  
YAKIMA SCHOOL DISTRICT

*I cannot do my job, teachers cannot do our jobs, without our paras. They are our first line of defense. I am only as great as our educational professionals are.*

”

### **Fully fund the Paraeducator Certificate Program**

Training within the certificate program will not happen without full funding (four days) by the Legislature. The Board advises the Legislature to continue building on their investment, and fully fund the program. High-quality paraeducator support in every classroom will help meet the needs of Washington’s most diverse and vulnerable students. When fully funded, all paraeducators—new hires and those currently employed—will complete the Fundamental Course of Study and then complete an additional 70 hours of professional development to attain the general certificate.

### **Remove the current deadlines to meet the requirements of the FCS**

Allow school districts the entire school year to provide training to paraeducators, regardless of their date of hire. School districts, especially larger districts, have raised concerns that they will not be able to train all of their paraeducators within the deadlines currently required by RCW. Also, there is a concern by smaller districts that they will not be able to provide tailored, district-specific, training by current deadlines.

### **Provide additional funding to cover the delivery and administrative cost of the Fundamental Course of Study**

District budgets are limited. They often do not have dedicated funding to provide for the delivery and the development of new required state training, and districts must cover release time for instructional coaches. Adding new requirements to lean administrative teams is a heavy burden on the education system.

# Conclusion

**The primary takeaway from the pilot is that school districts and partner providers have confirmed that they do have the capacity to implement and train paraeducators on the Paraeducator Certificate Program.**

School districts and ESDs successfully trained paraeducators with in-person training, online courses, or both. Most importantly, the pilot introduced potential challenges to the full implementation of the program and allowed opportunities to address them successfully. PESB staff will continue to distribute information and resources (e.g. toolkits, videos, webinars, and more which can be found in Appendix 4) to guide districts in their successful implementation of the certificate program.

However, moving forward, school districts do require assistance to implement the training successfully. The Paraeducator Board recommends the following to the Legislature:

1. Fully fund the implementation of the Paraeducator Certificate Program - four days of training - for school districts to meet the requirements of the program;
2. Allow school districts the entire school year to provide training to paraeducators, regardless of their date of hire; and
3. Provide additional funding to cover the district costs to deliver and administer the program.

“

HUMAN RESOURCES SPECIALIST  
LONGVIEW SCHOOL DISTRICT

*They will know that we are investing in them and that we want them to be more successful rather than trying to learn it on the job because those students are right there and they need them right away.*

”

“

PARAEDUCATOR  
YAKIMA SCHOOL DISTRICT

*The small size of the training, I believe, led everyone to feel safe in speaking openly and honestly about difficult topics. We really became a close group and it helped us really absorb the information being presented.*

”

# Acknowledgements

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## Paraeducator Board

The Paraeducator Board consists of nine members appointed to four-year terms, and its chair is appointed by the Governor. All members have served since 2017 unless noted:

**Yukari Amos**

Central Washington University (2019 - present)

**Jan Byers-Kirsch**

Central Washington University (2017 - 2019)

**Jessica Giffin**

Parent Teacher Association

**Ricardo Iñiguez**

Wenatchee High School

**Mandy Manning**

Spokane Public Schools

**Cindy Rockholt**

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

**Laura Rogers**

Everett School District

**Loren Sickles (Vice-Chair)**

Evergreen School District

**Cathy Smith (Chair)**

Olympia School District

**Ann Williamson**

Lower Columbia College

## Pilot partners

The pilot was led by four school districts and two ESDs. The Paraeducator Board thanks the participation, leadership, and commitment of time from each of these individuals:

**Peter Aiau**

WEA

**Stephanie Arnold**

HR Director, Yakima School District

**Janet Beck**

WEA MidState UniServ Representative

**David Forsythe**

NW ESD 189

**Natalie Fowler**

Issaquah School District

**Judy Heasly**

Issaquah School District

**John Kerr**

Yakima School District

**Connie Kliewer**

NEW ESD 101

**Michelle Musso**

Longview School District

**Tracie Poindexter-Canton**

NEW ESD 101

**Gail Pratt**

Riverside School District

**Ken Russell**

Riverside School District



## Paraeducator Board mission and vision

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### Intent

Paraeducators provide the majority of instruction in programs designed by the legislature to reduce the opportunity gap. By setting common statewide standards, requiring training in the standards, and offering career development for paraeducators, as well as training for teachers and principals who work with paraeducators, students in these programs have a better chance of succeeding.

### Mission and vision

#### Vision

A fully trained paraeducator workforce that supports student learning.

#### Mission

The Paraeducator Board ensures statewide professional standards and training for paraeducators so they are equipped to support diverse student learning. The Board empowers paraeducators to pursue career advancement by supporting accessible pathways to teacher certification.

## Paraeducator Board staff

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**Alexandra Manuel**, Executive Director, Paraeducator Board, PESB  
(360) 725-6275

**Jack Busbee**, Associate Director, Paraeducator Board, PESB  
[Jack.busbee@k12.wa.us](mailto:Jack.busbee@k12.wa.us); 360-725-6377

**Zoe Hammes-Hefti**, Program Specialist, Paraeducator Board, PESB  
[Zoe.hammes-hefti@k12.wa.us](mailto:Zoe.hammes-hefti@k12.wa.us); 360-725-4956

**Jonelle Adams**, Consultant to PESB

# Appendices

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<b>1. Paraeducator Certificate Program Flyer</b>	<b>20</b>
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<b>2. Paraeducator Standards of Practice</b>	<b>21</b>
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<b>3. Fundamental Course of Study units</b>	<b>23</b>
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<b>4. Additional online resources</b>	<b>24</b>
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# PARAEDUCATOR CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Standards of practice  
and professional development  
for Washington paraeducators

## FUNDAMENTAL COURSE OF STUDY (FCS)



- **Details:** The FCS covers the new paraeducator standards of practice. School districts must provide this training to all employed paraeducators.
- **Training time:** 28 hours
- **Requirements:** Required for all paraeducators beginning in the 2019-20 school year.

## GENERAL PARAEDUCATOR CERTIFICATE



- **Details:** The general certificate offers professional development to improve instructional practices. School districts must provide this training to all employed paraeducators.
- **Training time:** 70 hours
- **Expiration:** This certificate does not expire.
- **Requirements:** Required for all paraeducators to complete within three years of the FCS.

## SUBJECT MATTER CERTIFICATES

### English Language Learner

- **Details:** The English Language Learner certificate offers coursework in topics such as language acquisition, cultural competence, and instructional strategies. Paraeducators may allocate certificate hours towards the attainment of the general certificate.
- **Training time:** 20 hours
- **Expiration:** Five years. Renewable.
- **Requirements:** This certificate is not a requirement for employment. Paraeducators must first complete the FCS.



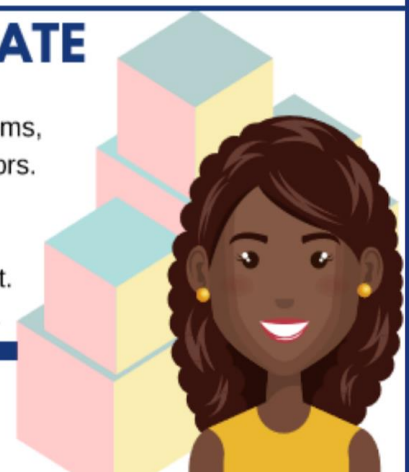
### Special Education

- **Details:** The Special Education certificate offers coursework in topics such as special education processes, culturally responsive strategies, and behavioral support. Paraeducators may allocate certificate hours towards the attainment of the general certificate.
- **Training time:** 20 hours
- **Expiration:** Five years. Renewable.
- **Requirements:** This certificate is not a requirement for employment. Paraeducators must first complete the FCS.

## ADVANCED PARAEDUCATOR CERTIFICATE



- **Details:** The advanced certificate offers additional professional development on the following duties: assisting high-impact classrooms, supporting specialized instruction, and mentoring other paraeducators.
- **Training time:** 75 hours
- **Expiration:** Five years. Renewable.
- **Requirements:** This certificate is not a requirement for employment. Paraeducators must first complete the FCS and general certificate.



paraboard@k12.wa.us  
<http://bit.ly/ParaProgram>  
#WAparaPower

# Appendix 2: Paraeducator Standards of Practice

## Paraeducator Standards of Practice

STANDARD 1	STANDARD 2	STANDARD 3	STANDARD 4	STANDARD 5
<b>Support educational outcomes</b>	<b>Demonstrate professionalism and ethical practices</b>	<b>Support a positive and safe learning environment</b>	<b>Communicate effectively and participate in the team process</b>	<b>Demonstrate cultural competency</b>
<p><b>1.1 Knowledge Competencies:</b></p> <p>A. Proficiency in basic reading, writing, and math skills</p> <p>B. Knowledge of basic computer applications (Word, PPT, Excel), data collection, assessments and software applications to support K-12 education</p> <p>C. Knowledge of one’s own cultural identity and how it influences perceptions, values, and practices</p>	<p><b>2.1 Knowledge Competencies:</b></p> <p>A. Knowledge of the Code of Professional Conduct for education (WAC 181.87) and applicable district policies and procedures</p> <p>B. Knowledge of the distinctions in the roles and responsibilities of teachers, paraeducators, administrators, families, and other team members</p> <p>C. Knowledge of the need to protect civil and human rights pertaining to all students, families, and staff</p> <p>D. Knowledge of the importance and purpose of confidentiality of student information</p>	<p><b>3.1 Knowledge Competencies:</b></p> <p>A. Knowledge of child and adolescent developmental milestones/stages and potential early warning indicators (e.g. attendance, behavior, and academic progress)</p> <p>B. Knowledge of strategies to create an equitable learning environment which fosters the unique strengths and abilities of students being served</p> <p>C. Knowledge of behavioral support systems/strategies that create inclusive and safe learning environments</p>	<p><b>4.1 Knowledge Competencies:</b></p> <p>A. Knowledge of how multiple communication methods contribute to collaborative teamwork</p> <p>B. Knowledge of collaborative team strategies and decision making</p> <p>C. Knowledge of the need to respect individual differences among all students, families, and staff</p> <p>D. Knowledge of the importance of giving and receiving feedback regarding student learning and/or personal performance</p>	<p><b>5.1 Knowledge Competencies:</b></p> <p>A. Knowledge of and respect for different ethnic, cultural, abilities, and linguistic backgrounds of students, families, staff, and community being served</p> <p>B. Knowledge of strategies to support and maintain a culturally inclusive learning environment</p> <p>C. Knowledge of student cultural histories and contexts, as well as family norms and values in different cultures</p>
<p><b>1.2 Skill Competencies:</b></p> <p>A. Demonstrate ability to assist in reviewing, preparing, delivering, and reinforcing district/school/classroom instructional outcomes (e.g. tutoring, individual and small group instruction) as directed by certificated/licensed staff</p> <p>B. Demonstrate the ability to assist in recording and maintaining data as directed by certificated/licensed staff</p>	<p><b>2.2 Skill Competencies:</b></p> <p>A. Adhere to code of professional conduct and applicable district policies, and procedures</p> <p>B. Pursue and participate in staff professional development and learning opportunities</p>	<p><b>3.2 Skill Competencies:</b></p> <p>A. Demonstrate ability to assist students at appropriate developmental stages and report student concerns or risk factors to certificated staff or supervisor</p> <p>B. Demonstrate ability to implement behavior support systems/strategies as directed by certificated staff or supervisor</p>	<p><b>4.2 Skill Competencies:</b></p> <p>A. Demonstrate the ability to utilize various communication methods, problem-solving skills, and collaboration strategies with staff, students, families, and community</p> <p>B. Demonstrate the ability to initiate and provide relevant feedback regarding job duties, performance tasks, and student learning outcomes</p>	<p><b>5.2 Skill Competencies:</b></p> <p>A. Demonstrate the ability to assist in implementing educational material which represents and supports various cultures and abilities of students being served as directed by certificated/licensed staff</p> <p>B. Demonstrate the ability to foster a culturally inclusive environment as directed by certificated/licensed staff or supervisor</p>

## Appendix 2: Paraeducator Standards of Practice

<p>C. Demonstrate ability to assist in administration of assessments and monitoring student progress as directed by certificated/licensed staff</p>	<p>C. Adhere to and follow district's mission, policies, procedures, and personnel practices</p>	<p>C. Adhere to district prescribed health, safety, and emergency policies and school guidelines</p>	<p>C. Demonstrate ability to apply feedback regarding student learning outcomes and/or personal performance</p>
<p>D. Demonstrate ability to utilize technology to support educational and safety outcomes as directed by certificated/licensed staff</p>	<p>D. Adhere to confidentiality as consistent with all applicable laws, regulations, policies, and procedures</p>	<p>D. (When assigned to CTE classes) Demonstrates ability to follow and assist in monitoring Career and Technical Education (CTE) program/class safety procedures as directed by district and/or instructor</p>	



### Appendix 3: Fundamental Course of Study Outline

<b>Support Educational Outcomes</b>	<b>Minimum hour(s)</b>
FCS01: Introduction to Cultural Identity and Diversity	4
FCS02: Methods of Educational and Instructional Support	4
FCS03: Technology Basics	2
FCS04: Using and Collecting Data	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>11</b>

<b>Demonstrate Professionalism and Ethical Practices</b>	<b>Minimum hour(s)</b>
FCS05: District Orientation of Roles and Responsibilities	3
FCS06: Equity	3
<b>Total:</b>	<b>6</b>

<b>Support a Positive and Safe Learning Environment</b>	<b>Minimum hour(s)</b>
FCS07: Behavior management strategies including de-escalation techniques	2
FCS08: Child and Adolescent Development	2
FCS09: Emergency and Health Safety	1
FCS10: Positive and Safe Learning Environment	3
<b>Total:</b>	<b>8</b>

<b>Communicate Effectively and Participate in the Team Process</b>	<b>Minimum hour(s)</b>
FCS11: Communication Basics	2
FCS12: Communication Challenges	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3</b>

**Total: 28 hours**

## Appendix 4: Additional Resources

### Additional Resources

Throughout the final report, several items and additional resources were referenced. For a more in-depth description of different aspects of the Paraeducator Certificate Program, we welcome you to follow the links below for further information.

#### Paraeducator Certificate Program

There are four components to the Paraeducator Certificate Program. By following the address listed below, you will find more information on each certificate, which includes standards, requirements for attainment, and information for renewal. Also, you will gain access to the Paraeducator Certificate Program Implementation Toolkit. The toolkit is an excellent resource for districts seeking information on how to implement the program.

<http://bit.ly/ParaCertProgram>

#### Reports

There have been three reports written regarding paraeducator training over the last five years. Two were published by the Paraeducator Workgroup, and the Paraeducator Board published a pilot midterm report in January 2019.

<http://bit.ly/ParaWorkGroupReports>

For the midterm report:

<http://bit.ly/ParaMidReport>

#### Online courses for paraeducators

OSPI and PESB have developed several online courses over the last three years for paraeducators, and two online courses for teachers and administrators who work with paraeducators. The names of these courses are:

- Paraeducators: what we do matters
- ELL Subject Matter Certificate
- Special Education Subject Matter Certificate
- Teachers who work with paraeducators
- Administrators who work with paraeducators

For more information on these free online courses, please follow this link:

<http://bit.ly/ParaOnlineCourses>