



WSPTA acknowledges that the education of children in our schools is depends upon the excellence of the educators working with those children. Paraeducators are classified staff who perform many functions in schools, including instructional assistance and tutoring under the supervision of a teacher. In 2017, the Legislature passed [ESHB 1115](#), that provides new rules and better support for school districts to train paraeducators, and provides a simpler career path for paraeducators to become certified teachers.¹ In 2018, the Legislature must continue to invest in these staff who work with the most vulnerable students, and whose work is critical to closing the opportunity gap.

Background

- **Working with highest need students** - In Washington state, paraeducators provide the majority of instruction (62%) to students with disabilities, students learning English, and students from low-income families. There are approximately 27,000 paraeducators working in Washington's public schools (pre-K and K-12).²
- **Five years in the making** - In 2017, after a five-year lobbying effort that included a year-long study by a state-commissioned panel, multiple hearings, and a statewide grassroots advocacy effort (all supported by WSPTA), the legislature passed [ESHB 1115](#). The bill provides new rules and better support for school districts to train paraeducators, and provides a simpler career path for paraeducators to become a certified teacher.¹
- **What does the law do?** - A new state board will oversee and support community college programs to help paraeducators transition a two-year technical degree to a four-year teaching degree that includes certification. Grant programs will support districts that develop their own certification programs, and specific training programs.
- **First-in-the-nation** - Washington state paraeducators have been recognized by the state as an important member of the instructional team. No other state in the country has taken the step Washington state took in the 2017 session to provide a comprehensive professional development program for our paraeducators. The voice of the Washington State PTA played a critical role in the passage of [ESHB 1115](#).

Next Steps for 2018 Legislative Session

WSPTA advocates to keep the momentum going by urging that the Legislature continues to pay attention and build the foundation for lasting changes. In the upcoming legislative session, PSE-Classified 1948 (the paraeducator union that was the driving force behind the new law) will advocate for **\$1,600,000** in the 2018 Supplemental Budget³:

- **\$100,000** - In the 2016 legislative session, the Legislature provided \$1 million to build online training modules for paraeducators. These training modules have been provided to the paraeducator board for final refinement and approval. Based upon their review, it appears small changes may be needed on some of these modules. Current estimates are that the Legislature should provide \$100,000 to update these modules to meet the needs identified by the board.
- **\$1,500,000** - Training modules are needed for paraeducators who work in specialized programs like special education and the transitional bilingual instruction program. The Legislature should provide \$1.5 million to build online training modules for special education (\$500,000) and the transitional bilingual instruction program (\$1,000,000) paraeducators.

For More Information

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Citations

1. ESHB 1115 (2017). <http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1115&Year=2017>
2. Morton, Neal. With Principals in "Crisis Mode," New Washington State Law Taps into Thousands of Potential Teacher Recruits. Seattle Times, August 20, 2017. <https://www.seattletimes.com/education/lab/with-principals-in-crisis-mode-new-state-law-taps-into-thousands-of-potential-teacher-recruits/>
3. Doug Nelson, Gov. Relations Director for PSE/SEIU Classified 1948, *Personal communication.*

**For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website (www.wastatepta.org)*