
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5054

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Wellman, Dhingra, Nobles, Saldaña, Valdez, and C. Wilson)

1 AN ACT Relating to promoting and facilitating the use of
2 professional learning communities; amending RCW 28A.150.205,
3 28A.415.430, and 28A.415.434; and creating a new section.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that it has already
6 recognized the positive impact that effective professional learning
7 has on student learning and that a critical component of effective
8 professional learning is collaboration between educators who are all
9 committed to working together on an ongoing basis to improve student
10 outcomes. However, collaboration does not magically happen on its
11 own; school districts must prioritize creating a regular and
12 dedicated time for educators to meet and work together during the
13 school week in order to realize the benefits of effective
14 professional learning and create an environment of continuous
15 improvement for their students and themselves. Research shows that
16 professional learning communities are an extremely effective
17 mechanism for promoting collaboration. Professional learning
18 communities not only encourage collaboration but also promote
19 collective creativity and provide space for educators to reflect on
20 their own instructional practices and their students' needs in a
21 supportive environment. Research also shows that providing educators

1 time for professional learning communities on a regular and ongoing
2 basis leads to greater job satisfaction and higher morale and creates
3 a more positive school climate while also positively impacting
4 student learning. In professional learning communities, educators
5 focus on the various facets of the students' public education
6 experience including their academic, social and emotional, and mental
7 and behavioral health needs and goals. They help educators increase
8 their professional capacity to rethink their practice together, to
9 challenge existing assumptions about instruction, and to dive deeply
10 into analyzing student data and collaboratively plan instruction,
11 interventions and supports that address the needs of the whole child.
12 It is, therefore, the legislature's intent to encourage school
13 districts to build time into their school calendars to accommodate
14 weekly and even daily time for educational staff to engage in
15 professional learning communities.

16 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28A.150.205 and 2018 c 8 s 5 are each amended to
17 read as follows:

18 Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definition in
19 this section applies throughout RCW 28A.150.200 through 28A.150.295.

20 (1) "Instructional hours" means those hours students are provided
21 the opportunity to engage in educational activity planned by and
22 under the direction of school district staff, as directed by the
23 administration and board of directors of the district, inclusive of
24 intermissions for class changes, recess, and teacher/parent-guardian
25 conferences that are planned and scheduled by the district for the
26 purpose of discussing students' educational needs or progress, and
27 exclusive of time actually spent for meals. "Instructional hours"
28 include hours students are engaging in educational activities under
29 the supervision of noncertificated school district staff while
30 certificated staff participate in professional learning communities
31 as defined in RCW 28A.415.434.

32 (2) (a) If students are provided the opportunity to engage in an
33 educational activity that is part of the regular instructional
34 program concurrently with the consumption of breakfast, the period of
35 time designated for student participation in breakfast after the
36 bell, as defined in RCW 28A.235.200, must be considered instructional
37 hours.

38 (b) Breakfast after the bell programs, as defined in RCW
39 28A.235.200, including the provision of breakfast, are not considered

1 part of the definition or funding of the program of basic education
2 under Article IX of the state Constitution.

3 **Sec. 3.** RCW 28A.415.430 and 2016 c 77 s 2 are each amended to
4 read as follows:

5 (1) The term "professional learning" means a comprehensive,
6 sustained, job-embedded, and collaborative approach to improving
7 teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student
8 achievement. Professional learning fosters collective responsibility
9 for improved student performance and must comprise learning that is
10 aligned with student learning needs, educator development needs, and
11 school district((~~r~~)) or state improvement goals. Professional
12 learning shall have as its primary focus the improvement of teachers'
13 and school leaders' effectiveness in assisting all students to meet
14 the state learning standards. School districts are encouraged to
15 promote and facilitate effective and collaborative professional
16 learning by establishing a school calendar that provides up to four
17 hours each week for certificated instructional staff to engage in
18 professional learning communities during the school day.

19 (2) Professional learning is an ongoing process that is
20 measurable by multiple indicators and includes learning experiences
21 that support the acquisition and transfer of learning, knowledge, and
22 skills into the classroom and daily practice.

23 (3) Professional learning shall incorporate differentiated,
24 coherent, sustained, and evidence-based strategies that improve
25 educator effectiveness and student achievement, including job-
26 embedded coaching or other forms of assistance to support educators'
27 transfer of new knowledge and skills into their practice.

28 (4) Professional learning should include the work of established
29 collaborative teams of teachers, school leaders, and other
30 administrative, instructional, and educational services staff
31 members, who commit to working together on an ongoing basis to
32 accomplish common goals and who are engaged in a continuous cycle of
33 professional improvement that is focused on:

34 (a) Identifying student and educator learning needs using
35 multiple sources of data;

36 (b) Defining a clear set of educator learning goals based on the
37 rigorous analysis of these multiple data sources and the collective
38 and personalized learning needs of teachers and administrators;

1 (c) Continuously assessing the effectiveness of the professional
2 learning in achieving identified learning goals, improving teaching,
3 and assisting all students in meeting state academic learning
4 standards through reflection, observation, and sustained support;

5 (d) Using formative and summative measures to assess the
6 effectiveness of professional learning in achieving educator learning
7 goals;

8 (e) Realizing the three primary purposes for professional
9 learning: (i) Individual improvement aligned with individual goals;
10 (ii) school and team improvement aligned with school and team
11 improvement (~~(+goals+)~~) goals; and (iii) program implementation
12 aligned with state, district, and school improvement goals and
13 initiatives.

14 (5) Professional learning should be facilitated by well-prepared
15 school and district leaders who incorporate knowledge, skills, and
16 dispositions for leading professional learning of adults and meet the
17 standards described in RCW (~~(28A.300.602)~~) 28A.415.432. These
18 facilitators may include but are not limited to: Curriculum
19 specialists, central office administrators, principals, coaches,
20 mentors, master teachers, and other teacher leaders.

21 (6) Principals should assist staff with alignment of professional
22 learning tied to curriculum, instruction, and state and local
23 learning goals and assessments.

24 (7) Professional learning may be supported by external expert
25 assistance or additional activities that will be held to the same
26 definition and standards as internally supported professional
27 learning, and that:

28 (a) Address defined student and educator learning goals;

29 (b) Include, but are not limited to, courses, workshops,
30 institutes, networks, studio residencies, virtual learning modules,
31 and conferences provided by for-profit and nonprofit entities outside
32 the school such as universities, educational service districts,
33 technical assistance providers, networks of content specialists, and
34 other education organizations and associations; and

35 (c) Advance ongoing school-based professional learning that
36 occurs throughout the year with opportunities for regular practice
37 and feedback while developing new skills.

38 (8) If a school district provides time for professional learning
39 communities to promote ongoing professional learning during the
40 school day, the framework and characteristics of a professional

1 learning community shall be based on research of what creates an
2 effective professional learning community and shall be consistent
3 with the professional learning requirements established in this
4 section. If a school district provides time for professional learning
5 communities to promote ongoing professional development during the
6 school day, the specific framework and characteristics that will be
7 used to guide the implementation and continued functioning of the
8 professional learning community shall be established through
9 collective bargaining.

10 **Sec. 4.** RCW 28A.415.434 and 2016 c 77 s 4 are each amended to
11 read as follows:

12 The definitions in this section apply throughout RCW
13 (~~28A.300.600 and 28A.300.602~~) 28A.415.430 and 28A.415.432 unless
14 the context clearly requires otherwise.

15 (1) "Differentiated" means that professional learning experiences
16 are designed to meet the needs of individual educators based on
17 multiple sources of data such as professional growth plans,
18 observations, and student growth data.

19 (2) "Job-embedded" means a sustained series of activities such as
20 workshops and coaching occurring throughout the year that is
21 delivered within the context of an educator's instructional
22 assignments, including both subject and grade level, to support the
23 educator's acquisition and application of the knowledge and skills.

24 (3) "Professional learning community" refers to a group of
25 educators within a school or school district that meets regularly to
26 share expertise, reflect on their practice, and work collaboratively
27 to enhance their knowledge and skills to teach and support students'
28 academic, social and emotional learning and growth. A professional
29 learning community can be made up of educators across different
30 subject and support areas, grade levels and levels of leadership.

31 (4) "Student outcomes" refers to two broad categories of student
32 measures: Academic measures and nonacademic measures. Academic
33 measures refer to student learning, growth, and achievement.
34 Nonacademic measures are indicators such as health, behavioral, or
35 socioemotional factors that support student learning.

1 (~~(4)~~) (5) "Sustained" means ongoing professional learning
2 supported throughout the school year occurring several times within
3 and across school years.

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