

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2017 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 186

**FISCAL
NOTE**

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WOELFEL

[Introduced February 8, 2017; referred
to the Committee on Education; and then to the Committee
on Finance]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §18-5-18 and §18-5-44 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as
 2 amended; and to amend and reenact §18-8-1a of said code, all relating to adjusting the
 3 date upon which children become eligible for certain school programs and school
 4 attendance requirements; changing the kindergarten age attainment requirement from
 5 age five prior to September 1 to age five prior to July 1; changing the early childhood
 6 education program age attainment date requirement from age four prior to September 1
 7 to age four prior to July 1; and changing the age for which compulsory attendance begins
 8 to those who attain age six by July 1 of each year.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

1 That §18-5-18 and §18-5-44 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended
 2 and reenacted; and that §18-8-1a of said code be amended and reenacted, all to read as follows:

ARTICLE 5. COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION.

§18-5-18. Kindergarten programs.

1 (a) County boards shall provide kindergarten programs for all children who have attained
 2 the age of five prior to ~~September~~ July 1, of the school year in which the pupil enters the
 3 kindergarten program and may, pursuant to the provisions of section forty-four, article five,
 4 chapter eighteen of this code, establish kindergarten programs designed for children below the
 5 age of five. The programs for children who shall have attained the age of five shall be full-day
 6 everyday programs.

7 (b) Persons employed as kindergarten teachers, as distinguished from paraprofessional
 8 personnel, shall be required to hold a certificate valid for teaching at the assigned level as
 9 prescribed by rules established by the state board. The state board shall establish the minimum
 10 requirements for all paraprofessional personnel employed in kindergarten programs established
 11 pursuant to the provisions of this section and no such paraprofessional personnel may be
 12 employed in any kindergarten program unless he or she meets the minimum requirements.
 13 Beginning July 1, 2014, any person previously employed as an aide in a kindergarten program

14 and who is employed in the same capacity on and after that date and any new person employed
15 in that capacity in a kindergarten program on and after that date shall hold the position of aide
16 and either Early Childhood Classroom Assistant Teacher I, Early Childhood Classroom Assistant
17 Teacher II or Early Childhood Classroom Assistant Teacher III. Any person employed as an aide
18 in a kindergarten program that is eligible for full retirement benefits before July 1, 2020, may
19 remain employed as an aide in that position and shall be granted an Early Childhood Classroom
20 Assistant Teacher permanent authorization by the State Superintendent pursuant to section two-
21 a, article three, chapter eighteen-a of this code.

22 (c) The state board with the advice of the State Superintendent shall establish and
23 prescribe guidelines and criteria relating to the establishment, operation and successful
24 completion of kindergarten programs in accordance with the other provisions of this section.
25 guidelines and criteria so established and prescribed also are intended to serve for the
26 establishment and operation of nonpublic kindergarten programs and shall be used for the
27 evaluation and approval of those programs by the State Superintendent, provided application for
28 the evaluation and approval is made in writing by proper authorities in control of the programs.
29 The State Superintendent, annually, shall publish a list of nonpublic kindergarten programs,
30 including Montessori kindergartens that have been approved in accordance with the provisions of
31 this section. Montessori kindergartens established and operated in accordance with usual and
32 customary practices for the use of the Montessori method which have teachers who have training
33 or experience, regardless of additional certification, in the use of the Montessori method of
34 instruction for kindergartens shall be considered to be approved.

35 (d) Pursuant to the guidelines and criteria, and only pursuant to the guidelines and criteria,
36 the county boards may establish programs taking kindergarten to the homes of the children
37 involved, using educational television, paraprofessional personnel in addition to and to
38 supplement regularly certified teachers, mobile or permanent classrooms and other means
39 developed to best carry kindergarten to the child in its home and enlist the aid and involvement

40 of its parent or parents in presenting the program to the child; or may develop programs of a more
41 formal kindergarten type, in existing school buildings, or both, as the county board may determine,
42 taking into consideration the cost, the terrain, the existing available facilities, the distances each
43 child may be required to travel, the time each child may be required to be away from home, the
44 child's health, the involvement of parents and other factors as each county board may find
45 pertinent. The determinations by any county board are final and conclusive.

§18-5-44. Early childhood education programs.

1 (a) For the purposes of this section, an "early childhood education program" means a
2 program created under this section for children who have attained the age of four prior to
3 ~~September~~ July 1 of the school year in which the children enter the program.

4 (b) *Findings.* –

5 (1) Among other positive outcomes, early childhood education programs have been
6 determined to:

7 (A) Improve overall readiness when children enter school;

8 (B) Decrease behavioral problems;

9 (C) Improve student attendance;

10 (D) Increase scores on achievement tests;

11 (E) Decrease the percentage of students repeating a grade; and

12 (F) Decrease the number of students placed in special education programs;

13 (2) Quality early childhood education programs improve school performance and low-
14 quality early childhood education programs may have negative effects, especially for at-risk
15 children;

16 (3) West Virginia has the lowest percentage of its adult population twenty-five years of age
17 or older with a bachelor's degree and the education level of parents is a strong indicator of how
18 their children will perform in school;

19 (4) During the 2006-2007 school year, West Virginia ranked thirty-ninth among the fifty

20 states in the percentage of school children eligible for free and reduced lunches and this
21 percentage is a strong indicator of how the children will perform in school;

22 (5) For the school year 2008-2009, 13,135 students were enrolled in prekindergarten, a
23 number equal to approximately sixty-three percent of the number of students enrolled in
24 kindergarten;

25 (6) Excluding projected increases due to increases in enrollment in the early childhood
26 education program, projections indicate that total student enrollment in West Virginia will decline
27 by one percent, or by approximately 2,704 students, by the school year 2012-2013;

28 (7) In part, because of the dynamics of the state aid formula, county boards will continue
29 to enroll four-year-old students to offset the declining enrollments;

30 (8) West Virginia has a comprehensive kindergarten program for five-year-olds, but the
31 program was established in a manner that resulted in unequal implementation among the
32 counties, which helped create deficit financial situations for several county boards;

33 (9) Expansion of current efforts to implement a comprehensive early childhood education
34 program should avoid the problems encountered in kindergarten implementation;

35 (10) Because of the dynamics of the state aid formula, counties experiencing growth are
36 at a disadvantage in implementing comprehensive early childhood education programs; and

37 (11) West Virginia citizens will benefit from the establishment of quality comprehensive
38 early childhood education programs.

39 (c) Beginning no later than the school year 2012-2013 and continuing thereafter, county
40 boards shall provide early childhood education programs for all children who have attained the
41 age of four prior to ~~September~~ July 1, of the school year in which the children enter the early
42 childhood education program. Beginning no later than the school year 2016-2017 and continuing
43 thereafter, these early childhood education programs shall provide at least forty-eight thousand
44 minutes annually and no less than fifteen hundred minutes of instruction per week.

45 (d) The program shall meet the following criteria:

46 (1) It shall be voluntary, except that, upon enrollment, the provisions of section one-a,
47 article eight of this chapter apply to an enrolled student, subject to subdivision (4) of this
48 subsection;

49 (2) It shall be open to all children meeting the age requirement set forth in this section;

50 (3) It shall provide no less than fifteen hundred minutes of instruction per week, in a full
51 day program with at least forty-eight thousand minutes of instruction annually; and

52 (4) It shall permit a parent of an enrolled child to withdraw the child from that program by
53 notifying the district in writing. A child withdrawn under this section is not subject to the attendance
54 provisions of this chapter until that child again enrolls in a public school in this state.

55 (e) Enrollment of students in Head Start, or in any other program approved by the State
56 Superintendent as provided in this section, may be counted toward satisfying the requirement of
57 subsection (c) of this section.

58 (f) For the purposes of implementation financing, all counties are encouraged to make use
59 of funds from existing sources, including:

60 (1) Federal funds provided under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act pursuant
61 to 20 U. S. C. §6301, *et seq.*;

62 (2) Federal funds provided for Head Start pursuant to 42 U. S. C. §9831, *et seq.*;

63 (3) Federal funds for temporary assistance to needy families pursuant to 42 U. S. C. §601,
64 *et seq.*;

65 (4) Funds provided by the School Building Authority pursuant to article nine-d of this
66 chapter;

67 (5) In the case of counties with declining enrollments, funds from the state aid formula
68 above the amount indicated for the number of students actually enrolled in any school year; and

69 (6) Any other public or private funds.

70 (g) Each county board shall develop a plan for implementing the program required by this
71 section. The plan shall include the following elements:

72 (1) An analysis of the demographics of the county related to early childhood education
73 program implementation;

74 (2) An analysis of facility and personnel needs;

75 (3) Financial requirements for implementation and potential sources of funding to assist
76 implementation;

77 (4) Details of how the county board will cooperate and collaborate with other early
78 childhood education programs including, but not limited to, Head Start, to maximize federal and
79 other sources of revenue;

80 (5) Specific time lines for implementation; and

81 (6) Any other items the state board may require by policy.

82 (h) A county board shall submit its plan to the Secretary of the Department of Health and
83 Human Resources. The secretary shall approve the plan if the following conditions are met:

84 (1) The county board has maximized the use of federal and other available funds for early
85 childhood programs; and

86 (2) The county board has provided for the maximum implementation of Head Start
87 programs and other public and private programs approved by the State Superintendent pursuant
88 to the terms of this section; or

89 (3) The secretary finds that, if the county board has not met one or more of the
90 requirements of this subsection, the county board has acted in good faith and the failure to comply
91 was not the primary fault of the county board. Any denial by the secretary may be appealed to
92 the circuit court of the county in which the county board is located.

93 (i) The county board shall submit its plan for approval to the state board. The state board
94 shall approve the plan if the county board has complied substantially with the requirements of
95 subsection (g) of this section and has obtained the approval required in subsection (h) of this
96 section.

97 (j) Every county board shall submit its plan for reapproval by the Secretary of the

98 Department of Health and Human Resources and by the state board at least every two years after
99 the initial approval of the plan and until full implementation of the early childhood education
100 program in the county. As part of the submission, the county board shall provide a detailed
101 statement of the progress made in implementing its plan. The standards and procedures provided
102 for the original approval of the plan apply to any reapproval.

103 (k) A county board may not increase the total number of students enrolled in the county in
104 an early childhood program until its program is approved by the Secretary of the Department of
105 Health and Human Resources and the state board.

106 (l) The state board annually may grant a county board a waiver for total or partial
107 implementation if the state board finds that all of the following conditions exist:

108 (1) The county board is unable to comply either because:

109 (A) It does not have sufficient facilities available; or

110 (B) It does not and has not had available funds sufficient to implement the program;

111 (2) The county has not experienced a decline in enrollment at least equal to the total
112 number of students to be enrolled; and

113 (3) Other agencies of government have not made sufficient funds or facilities available to
114 assist in implementation.

115 Any county board seeking a waiver shall apply with the supporting data to meet the criteria
116 for which they are eligible on or before March 25, for the following school year. The State
117 Superintendent shall grant or deny the requested waiver on or before April 15, of that same year.

118 (m) The provisions of subsections (b), (c) and (d), section eighteen of this article relating
119 to kindergarten apply to early childhood education programs in the same manner in which they
120 apply to kindergarten programs.

121 (n) Except as required by federal law or regulation, no county board may enroll students
122 who will be less than four years of age prior to ~~September~~ July 1, for the year they enter school.

123 (o) Neither the state board nor the state department may provide any funds to any county

124 board for the purpose of implementing this section unless the county board has a plan approved
125 pursuant to subsections (h), (i) and (j) of this section.

126 (p) The state board shall promulgate a rule in accordance with the provisions of article
127 three-b, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code for the purposes of implementing the provisions of this
128 section. The state board shall consult with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human
129 Resources in the preparation of the rule. The rule shall contain the following:

130 (1) Standards for curriculum;

131 (2) Standards for preparing students;

132 (3) Attendance requirements;

133 (4) Standards for personnel; and

134 (5) Any other terms necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

135 (q) The rule shall include the following elements relating to curriculum standards:

136 (1) A requirement that the curriculum be designed to address the developmental needs of
137 four-year-old children consistent with prevailing research on how children learn;

138 (2) A requirement that the curriculum be designed to achieve long-range goals for the
139 social, emotional, physical and academic development of young children;

140 (3) A method for including a broad range of content that is relevant, engaging and
141 meaningful to young children;

142 (4) A requirement that the curriculum incorporate a wide variety of learning experiences,
143 materials and equipment, and instructional strategies to respond to differences in prior
144 experience, maturation rates and learning styles that young children bring to the classroom;

145 (5) A requirement that the curriculum be designed to build on what children already know
146 in order to consolidate their learning and foster their acquisition of new concepts and skills;

147 (6) A requirement that the curriculum meet the recognized standards of the relevant
148 subject matter disciplines;

149 (7) A requirement that the curriculum engage children actively in the learning process and

150 provide them with opportunities to make meaningful choices;

151 (8) A requirement that the curriculum emphasize the development of thinking, reasoning,
152 decision-making and problem-solving skills;

153 (9) A set of clear guidelines for communicating with parents and involving them in
154 decisions about the instructional needs of their children; and

155 (10) A systematic plan for evaluating program success in meeting the needs of young
156 children and for helping them to be ready to succeed in school.

157 (r) After the school year 2012-2013, on or before July 1, of each year, each county board
158 shall report the following information to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human
159 Resources and the State Superintendent:

160 (1) Documentation indicating the extent to which county boards are maximizing resources
161 by using the existing capacity of community-based programs, including, but not limited to, Head
162 Start and child care; and

163 (2) For those county boards that are including eligible children attending approved,
164 contracted community-based programs in their net enrollment for the purposes of calculating state
165 aid pursuant to article nine-a of this chapter, documentation that the county board is equitably
166 distributing funding for all children regardless of setting.

ARTICLE 8. COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.

§18-8-1a. Commencement and termination of compulsory school attendance; public school entrance requirements; exceptions.

1 (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of section one of this article, compulsory school
2 attendance begins with the school year in which the sixth birthday is reached prior to ~~September~~
3 July 1, of such year or upon enrolling in a publicly supported kindergarten program and, subject
4 to subdivision (3) of this subsection, continues to the sixteenth birthday or for as long as the
5 student continues to be enrolled in a school system after the sixteenth birthday.

6 (1) A child may be removed from such kindergarten program when the principal, teacher

7 and parent or guardian concur that the best interest of the child would not be served by requiring
8 further attendance: *Provided*, That the principal shall make the final determination with regard to
9 compulsory school attendance in a publicly supported kindergarten program.

10 (2) The compulsory school attendance provision of this article shall be enforced against a
11 person eighteen years of age or older for as long as the person continues to be enrolled in a
12 school system, and may not be enforced against the parent, guardian, or custodian of the person.

13 (3) Beginning with the 2011-2012, high school freshman cohort class of students, and
14 notwithstanding the provisions of section one of this article, compulsory school attendance begins
15 with the school year in which the sixth birthday is reached prior to ~~September~~ July 1, of such year
16 or upon enrolling in a publicly supported kindergarten program and continues to the seventeenth
17 birthday or for as long as the student continues to be enrolled in a school system after the
18 seventeenth birthday.

19 (b) Attendance at a state-approved or Montessori kindergarten, as provided in section
20 eighteen, article five of this chapter, is deemed school attendance for purposes of this section.
21 Prior to entrance into the first grade in accordance with section five, article two of this chapter,
22 each child must have either:

23 (1) Successfully completed such publicly or privately supported, state-approved
24 kindergarten program or Montessori kindergarten program; or

25 (2) Successfully completed an entrance test of basic readiness skills approved by the
26 county in which the school is located. The test may be administered in lieu of kindergarten
27 attendance only under extraordinary circumstances to be determined by the county board.

28 (c) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section and of section five, article two of this
29 chapter and section eighteen, article five of this chapter, a county board may provide for advanced
30 entrance or placement under policies adopted by said board for any child who has demonstrated
31 sufficient mental and physical competency for such entrance or placement.

32 (d) This section does not prevent a student from another state from enrolling in the same

- 33 grade in a public school in West Virginia as the student was enrolled at the school from which the
34 student transferred

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to adjust the date upon which children become eligible for certain school programs and school attendance requirements. The bill changes the kindergarten age attainment requirement from age five prior to September 1, to age five prior to July 1. The bill changes the early childhood education program age attainment date requirement from age four prior to September 1, to age four prior to July 1. The bill changes the age for which compulsory attendance begins to those who attain age six by July 1, of each year.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.