



## **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DAYS Requirements for 2020-2021**

**June 29, 2020**

The Washington State Legislature has been phasing in funding for professional learning time for certified instructional staff since 2018. See RCW [28A.150.415](#). The state will fund the equivalent of three professional learning days (PLDs) at the state allocation rate for certificated staff provided by the prototypical school model for the upcoming 2020-2021 school year. In light of the current recession, it is unclear if PLDs will continue to be included within the definition of basic education and funded in subsequent school years.

### **2020-2021 PLD Requirements**

The original funding limitations for the PLDs were general, requiring only that the funding be used to pay certificated staff for time spent engaged in professional learning. However, the funding for PLDs has developed legislative restrictions over the PLDs' short life. The legislature has now required school districts to use the equivalent of two of the funded PLDs to cover certain topics during the 2020-2021 school year.

#### **1. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) or Related Topics—Required PLD**

In the 2019 session, the legislature passed [RCW 28A.415.440](#), which requires school districts to use the equivalent of one state-funded PLD to train certificated instructional staff on one or more of the following topics during the 2020-2021 school year and every other year thereafter:

- Social-emotional learning;
- Trauma-informed practices;
- Recognition and response to emotional or behavioral distress using the model plan developed under RCW 28A.320.1271;
- Consideration of adverse childhood experiences;
- Mental health literacy;
- Antibullying strategies; or
- Culturally sustaining practices.

A district may choose to train on more than one of the listed topics. Districts may also choose how to spread this training out, with either continuous hours or shorter increments over multiple days. Districts should ensure they retain documentation showing they spent the required hours

on training certificated instructional staff on one or more of the listed topics during the 2020-2021 school year.

After a district fulfills these requirements during the 2020-2021 school year, its next obligation to use the equivalent of one state-funded PLD for training on such topics will be during the 2022-2023 school year (assuming funding for PLDs continues).

## **2. Closing Persistent Opportunity Gaps—Required PLD**

The 2020 supplemental operating budget requires school districts to use the equivalent of one state-funded PLD to train certificated instructional staff on each of the following topics during the 2020-2021 school year for the purposes of closing persistent opportunity gaps:

- Racial literacy;
- Cultural responsiveness; and
- Stereotype threat.

This requirement can be found on page 412 of the budget legislation, [Laws of 2020, ch. 357, § 505\(2\)\(b\)](#).

All three of these topics must be addressed during the equivalent of one funded PLD. For example, training certificated instructional staff on racial literacy and cultural responsiveness, but not on stereotype threat, will not satisfy the funding requirements. Districts should ensure they retain documentation showing they spent the required hours on training certificated instructional staff on all the listed topics during the 2020-2021 school year.

Currently, the funding requirements for the equivalent of one PLD regarding racial literacy, cultural responsiveness, and stereotype threat are limited to the 2020-2021 school year. As a budget proviso, the requirement is not an ongoing statutory requirement.

The above analysis is based on our interpretation of the legislation on the date of this email. It is possible that subsequent legislation or regulatory guidance could provide more flexibility or add more requirements regarding the use of state-funded PLDs.

School districts with questions about PLD requirements during the 2020-2021 school year may contact any of the Porter Foster Rorick attorneys listed below.