

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1669

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to alternative teacher certification.

Brief Description: Creating alternative teacher certification.

Sponsors: Representatives Johnson, Talcott, Mulliken, Sterk, Carlson, Hickel, Smith, Sump, D. Schmidt, Wensman, Sheahan, Clements, Boldt, Schoesler and Sullivan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/11/97, 2/24/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Smith; Sterk; Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Quall and Veloria.

Staff: Pat Shelledy (786-7149).

Background: Teachers in public or private schools must hold certificates authorized by the State Board of Education (SBE). The SBE establishes and enforces the rules determining eligibility for and certification of teachers in the common schools. Applicants for teacher certification must have completed a state approved college or university teacher preparation program and hold appropriate degrees, licenses, and complete additional course work as required by the state board.

There are two types of certificates: initial and continuing. An initial certificate is valid for four years. Candidates for initial certification must have a baccalaureate degree from an approved college or university. Teachers may obtain certain endorsements to teach certain subject areas and grade levels. To obtain an endorsement to teach certain classes or grade levels, an aspiring teacher must complete a certain number of hours in pertinent course work.

A person who does not have a teaching certificate may teach in public schools under limited circumstances. The SBE issues instructional specialist certificates to persons of unusual distinction or exceptional talent in a particular field, who are highly qualified and experienced in the subject matter to be taught, or temporary permits to individuals who are waiting for documentation of proof of completing normal certification requirements. Each of these certificates are temporary and carry restrictions.

The Legislature establishes for each school year in the Appropriations Act, a statewide salary allocation schedule for certificated employees. The schedule is for allocation purposes only. The Superintendent of Public Instruction calculates salary allocations for certificated staff by determining the district average salary for basic education staff using the salary allocation schedule. The superintendent may adjust the allocation based on the education and experience of the district's certificated staff.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The boards of directors of school districts are authorized to issue alternative teaching certificates to individuals who do not have a teaching certificate issued by the state. An individual may obtain an alternate teaching certificate that allows the person to teach in the state of Washington if the candidate:

- (1) Possesses a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education or an equivalent accrediting organization;
- (2) Has at least five years' work experience relevant to a primary subject area to be taught, or sufficient knowledge of the primary subject area to be taught. The superintendent of the school district will determine whether a candidate has sufficient knowledge subject to approval by the school board. The work or knowledge experience shall meet the requirements for an endorsement or endorsements in relevant subject areas;
- (3) Completes the national teacher's examination general knowledge test or, when available, the state certification assessment of basic skills tests. The district will choose which test must be taken and the level of performance necessary to obtain an alternative certificate;
- (4) Demonstrates to the superintendent and the local school board an ability to communicate information effectively to students;
- (5) Meets established age and character requirements; and
- (6) Possesses a written agreement with the school district to complete a two-year residency to provide instructional services in the district.

The alternate teaching certificate allows the holder full authority to teach as a part-time or full-time teacher. Alternative certificates are valid for two years only. The school district board of directors must develop a written policy containing criteria for successful completion of the two-year residency. Instructional services must be limited to the subject or subjects approved by the school board. The district and the individual must enter into a contract specifying the terms and conditions of employment. The agreements are exempt from the collective bargaining provisions for certificated employees. Collective bargaining agreements may not restrict employers authority to issue alternative teaching certificates.

After successful completion of the two-year residency, the district must present the individual to the SBE for initial certification. The state must certify the person without requiring additional course work or experience.

Alternate teaching certificates must be available beginning with the 1997-98 school year.

The salaries of the holders of the alternative certificates must be based on the statewide salary allocation schedule for individuals with zero years of service and the individual's degree. The two years of teaching under the alternative teaching certificate must be included in the calculation of the person's years of service following initial certification.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Once the state certification assessment of the basic skills test is available, the school district can require the applicant to take that test instead of the national teacher's examination general knowledge test. Alternative teaching certificates will be issued for two years instead of one. A specific provision is added to provide that a holder of the certificate may teach at any grade level in K-12, but the school district must approve the classes that the teacher can teach. Salary provisions are changed to provide that holders of alternative certificates salaries and allocation levels will be based on the person's degree and zero years of service, rather than upon consideration of the person's non-education work experience. An additional provision is added to amend collective bargaining provisions to, provide that a collective bargaining agreement may not limit an employer's authority to contract with persons under alternate teaching certification provisions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 5, 1997.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Many people who would be excellent teachers are foreclosed from teaching because of the certification requirements. Additional competition is good for the education system. School children should have the best teachers available. Sometimes schools have difficulty finding individuals with specific skills to teach particular classes and alternative certification would be helpful in finding teachers for those programs. Sometimes teachers are forced to teach classes that could be taught by someone with an alternative certificate. Alternative teaching certificates will help break the monopoly colleges have on issuing certificates.

Testimony Against: Alternative certification is a viable option under current law. Anyone who has a limited certificate under existing law can use that while the person pursues academic credentials necessary for initial certification. Certification should not be taken lightly. The state has a constitutional obligation to provide competent teachers and a general and uniform system of education in the public schools. Alternative teaching certificates will dilute standards. Subject area knowledge is important but is not a sufficient measure of effective teaching: teachers must also know how to teach. There is not a teacher shortage.

Testified: Representative Johnson, prime sponsor; Theresa Rudacille, Evergreen Freedom Foundation (pro); Chuck Hall, Superintendent, Yelm School District (pro); Holly Isamen, parent (pro); Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators (con); Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors' Association (con); Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals (con); Larry Davis, State Board of Education (con); Neal Supplee, State Board of Education (con); Ted Andrews, State Board of Education (con); Michael Vavrus, Washington Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (con); Cynthia Flynn, Central Washington University (con); Lee Ann Prielipp, Washington Education Association (con); Lloyd Gardner, citizen, (pro); Ron Taber, citizen, (pro); and Lois McMahan, citizen (pro).