

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 2581

Title: An act relating to the certification of specialists program.

Brief Description: Creating the certification of specialists program.

Sponsors: Representatives Schindler, Talcott, Koster, Mielke, Lambert, Crouse and Thomas.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Meeting Date: January 26, 2000

Bill Analysis Prepared by: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background: By law, Washington's public and private school teachers must hold valid teaching certificates provided by the state. The State Board of Education (SBE) establishes and enforces the rules for those certificates. Applicants for teacher certification must have completed state-approved college or university teacher preparation programs, hold appropriate degrees and licenses, and complete additional any course work required by the SBE.

There are two types of certificates: initial and continuing. An initial or residency certificate is valid for four years. Each candidate for initial certification must have either a baccalaureate or graduate degree from an approved college or university preparation program. A candidate must also obtain endorsements to teach certain subject areas and grade levels. To obtain an endorsement, an aspiring teacher must complete an established 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, issues conditional certificates to persons who are highly qualified and experienced in the subject matter to be taught, and issues 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: The Certification of Specialists program is established. Through the program, at the request of a school district or private school, the State Board of Education (SBE) will provide a one year, renewable, provisional teaching certificate to individuals who meet the following requirements:

1. The individual has a minimum of five years of work experience in math, science, foreign language, or another area of need identified by the school or district.
2. The individual holds a bachelor's degree, meets the age and character requirements established by the SBE, and has complied with the statutorily required background check.
3. The individual has completed a training program that includes direct classroom experience and requires the individual to pass a basic skills test and any subject matter test required of all teacher candidates planning to teach the subject. The program may include instruction in classroom safety and management, teaching methods, and state child abuse reporting requirements.

A district hiring a teacher specialist through this program will file a plan for a training program with the SBE. The components of the plan are described. The district must also provide the teacher specialist with at least 18 weeks of supervision, including formal observations, evaluations, and feedback. The one year certificate may be renewed annually at the request of a district. Teacher specialists who are retained by a school district for more than one year will continue to be formally mentored for at least two years. A teacher specialist who successfully complete three contract years of teaching will be awarded a continuing teaching certificate. The specialists will be placed on the salary schedule at a level that recognizes his or her college degree and work experience, with one year of credit for every three years of work in the specialty area.

School districts may hire part-time specialists who have expertise in math, science, technology, foreign language, or another area of need the district has identified. The part-time specialists must meet the age, character, and background check requirements established by the SBE. The specialists may not displace qualified certificated teachers who are already employed by the district. Districts must provide part-time specialists with an orientation and mentoring program. The district will also follow laws governing contracts for services performed by classified staff.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: None.

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