

Education Committee

E2SSB 5695

Brief Description: *Creating alternative routes to teacher certification.*

Sponsors: *By Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Eide, Finkbeiner, McAuliffe, Franklin, Hewitt, Rasmussen, Johnson, Shin, Patterson, Oke, Winsley and Kohl-Welles; by request of Governor Locke and Superintendent of Public Instruction).*

Hearing Date: *3/22/01*

Staff: *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 any additional course work required by the SBE.

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. The board also issues conditional certificates to persons who are highly qualified and experienced in the subject matter to be taught and 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.

In 2000 the Legislature created the Washington Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) to advise and provide recommendations on issues affecting educators. The PESB was also given a specific charge to provide recommendations for at least two high-quality alternative routes to teacher certification by December 1, 2000. The PESB submitted recommendations for three alternative routes, including recommendations for funding support and implementation.

Summary of Bill:

A statewide Partnership Grant program and the Alternative Route Conditional Scholarship program are created to support three alternative routes for teacher certification. Each route focuses on increasing the number of teachers in shortage and high need areas due to subject matter or geographic location.

Eligibility for Alternative Route One. To access state funding, the teacher candidate must meet the following requirements:

- seek an endorsement in special education or English as a second language;*
- have three years experience as a para-educator and be currently employed as a para-educator;*
- have an associate degree;*
- meet the age, good moral character, and personal fitness requirements for teachers;*
- pass the statewide basic skills exams, when available.*

Eligibility for Alternative Route Two. To access state funding, the teacher candidate must meet the following requirements:

- seek an endorsement in an identified subject or geographic shortage area;*
- have three years experience in a classified staff position and be currently employed in a classified staff position;*
- have a bachelor of arts or science degree;*
- once the state content test is available, successful completion of the content test;*
- meet the age, good moral character, and personal fitness requirements for teachers;*
- pass the statewide basic skills exams, when available.*

Eligibility for Alternative Route Three. The teacher candidate must meet the following requirements:

- seek an endorsement in identified subject shortage area, except special education or English as a second language;*
- have five years experience in the work force;*
- have a bachelor of arts or science degree;*
- once the state content test is available, successful completion of the content test;*
- demonstrate successful experiences with students or children, (which may be shown by reference letters);*
- meet the age, good moral character, and personal fitness requirements for teachers;*
- pass the statewide basic skills exams, when available.*

School districts may enroll candidates who are seeking endorsements in non-shortage areas; however, these candidates are not eligible for state funds under the Partnership Grant program.

Partnership Grant Program: To the extent funds are provided, school districts may partner with the regional Educational Service District and higher education teachers' preparation programs to provide one or more of the three alternative route programs. Each of the

alternative route programs must provide a mentor in the classroom with the teacher candidate until the candidate demonstrates competency necessary to manage the classroom with part-time supervision and guidance from the mentor. The programs may enroll candidates beginning in January 2002.

School districts may apply for grant funds to be used for stipends for the teacher candidates and the mentors by submitting a proposal to the WPESB. The WPESB, with support from the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, selects the districts that receive the partnership grants according to specified factors.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy must evaluate the Partnership Grant program and submit an interim evaluation to the WPESB, the Legislature and the Governor by December 1, 2002, and a final evaluation by December 1, 2004.

Alternative Route Conditional Scholarship Program: To the extent funds are provided, the WPESB awards conditional scholarships to eligible para-educators and other classified staff accepted in alternative routes one or two. The scholarship award covers up to \$4000 of the tuition cost for the alternative route in which the recipient is enrolled. The conditional scholarship provides one year of loan forgiveness in exchange for two years of teaching in a Washington State K-12 public school. If the recipient fails to teach in a Washington public school, then the individual must repay the scholarship principal with interest.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is authorized to adopt rules, collect and manage repayments and accept grant donations for the conditional scholarship program.

The Partnership Grant program and the Alternative Route Conditional Scholarship program expire June 30, 2005.

Appropriation: *None.*

Fiscal Note: *Requested on March 16, 2001.*

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