

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5983

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to professional certification of teachers.

Brief Description: Regarding professional certification of teachers.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Pflug, Schmidt, Esser, Delvin and Benson).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/17/05, 3/30/05 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- Transfers from the State Board of Education to the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) rulemaking for the professional certification of teachers and for the approval of the programs that prepare teachers for that certification.
- Describes some of the professional certification issues the PESB must address.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Santos, Shabro and Tom.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative P. Sullivan, Vice Chair.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

The State Board of Education (SBE) adopts rules for the certification of educators and educational administrators, with advice from the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB). The rules are then implemented by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The SBE has adopted a two-tier certification system for new teachers. The first tier, which is granted upon completion of an approved college teacher preparation program that leads to either a baccalaureate or graduate degree, is called a residency certificate. This certificate is valid for five years. The second tier certificate is now called a professional certificate. Beginning with September 1, 2000, all beginning teachers and most experienced teachers from out-of-state are required to earn the professional certificate within five years of obtaining residency certificates. A two-year extension may be granted if the candidates are making progress toward the professional certificate.

This process is different in many significant ways from the process for the previously required continuing certificate. The professional certificate is performance-based. It relies heavily on the production of school/classroom-based performance indicators that are evaluated by members of the teacher's professional growth team. Professional growth team means a team comprised of the candidate, a colleague specified by the candidate, a college or university advisor, and a representative from the school district in which the candidate teaches. The continuing certificate was based on earning 45 credits beyond the bachelor's degree.

During the interim, several legislators met with groups of teachers to discuss the new requirements. Although the new professional certification process is working well for some candidates, for others the process faces unresolved challenges that include wide variations in the quality, relevance, and cost of different certification programs.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The PESB must adopt rules for approval of programs leading to the professional certification of teachers. The rules must be written to allow the maximum program choice, portability, and efficiency for applicants.

Under the rules, professional certification will not be required until 2008-09. In addition, it will not be required for any individual before the fifth year following the receipt of a continuing employment contract. Teachers with certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards will automatically receive professional certification. Teachers who are currently enrolled in or participating in a program leading to professional certification may continue the program under the administrative rules in place when the teacher began the program.

The rules must provide criteria for the approval of accredited institutions of higher education within the state that wish to offer a program leading to professional certification. The rules must be written to encourage institutions of higher education to partner with local school districts, consortia of school districts, or educational service districts, as appropriate, to provide instruction for teachers seeking professional certification. By August 31, 2007, they must allow educational service districts to offer programs leading to professional certification. The rules will encourage institutions of higher education to offer professional certificate coursework for continuing education credit hours and permit them to offer certification as part of a Master's Degree program. The rules must also require the provision

of a liaison between approved programs and those school districts with applicants for professional certification.

The PESB must identify a professional certification process for out-of-state certificated teachers who are not yet certificated in Washington. The process must grant professional certification to teachers with more than five years of recent teaching experience. It may require those teachers to take a course in or demonstrate understanding of the state's academic standards.

An evaluation process for approved programs must be identified. By November 1, 2005, the PESB must provide to the legislative education committees, a preliminary report on the criteria to be used in the evaluation. The elements of the evaluation process are described. The PESB must identify:

- (1) a process for awarding conditional approval of a program;
- (2) a three-year evaluation cycle once a program receives full approval;
- (3) a method for investigating programs that have received numerous complaints from students enrolled in the program and from students who have recently completed the program;
- (4) a method for investigating programs at the PESB's discretion; and
- (5) a method for using program completer satisfaction responses in making the evaluation.

The SBE will no longer have any policy authority over professional certification.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The amended bill adds portability to the criteria used for program approval, directs the PESB to add Educational Service Districts as program leaders by August 31, 2007, permits the PESB to evaluate programs at the board's discretion, replaces the out-of-state reciprocity language with language that grants professional certification to experienced teachers with recent teaching experience, and directs the PESB to report back to the legislative education committees by November 1, 2005, with the criteria to be used to evaluate professional certification programs. Removes language about removing certification of teachers for viewing or having unauthorized sexually explicit material at school.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support of engrossed substitute) The professional certification process is not working as it was originally intended. Teachers and school administrators are frustrated and discouraged by the lack of clarity that exists around the program's requirements. Teachers are also frustrated by the high cost of most of the programs and by the lack of substance of

many of the requirements included within them. This legislation will help ensure that the programs are evaluated more frequently and successfully. It will also transfer rulemaking for professional certification to the PESB, the appropriate board for this activity.

(With concerns on engrossed substitute) The legislation splits the responsibility for initial and professional certification between the PESB and the SBE. This division will not help streamline or clarify the certification process, it may well add to the confusion teachers, school districts, and colleges are experiencing. The SBE has adopted rules that address many of the issues covered by the legislation. The Superintendent of Public Instruction is working with institutions of higher education to ensure the colleges are addressing the areas of concern. The legislation is no longer necessary.

Testimony Against: (Opposed to engrossed substitute) The professional certification process promotes reflective thinking and helps teachers grow into great educators. Although the programs have had some implementation challenges, the colleges are committed to fixing the problems that teachers have identified. They are working on creating lower cost programs, offering courses online, during summers, and on weekends, and are creating a system that allows students to have their pro-cert credits accepted by different institutions of higher education. They have also embraced a fast-track for experienced teachers from out-of-state. The bill is unnecessary and may well hinder the process now in place to improve the programs. The Legislature should hold off for a short time to see if the current process for solving the problems will work as expected. If the programs haven't improved significantly by this fall, then take action next year. Certification responsibilities should not be removed from the SBE and should not be divided between two agencies.

Persons Testifying: (In support of engrossed substitute) Senator Pflug, prime sponsor; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; and Jennifer Wallace, Professional Educator Standards Board.

(With concerns on engrossed substitute) Bobbie May, State Board of Education; and Arlene Hett, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

(Opposed to engrossed substitute) Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals; and Judy Mitchell, Washington State University.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.