
Education Committee

ESSB 5983

Brief Description: Regarding professional certification of teachers.

Sponsors: Senators Pflug, Schmidt, Esser, Delvin and Benson.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Transfers from the State Board of Education to the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) rulemaking for professional certification for teachers and approval for the preparation programs leading to the certification.
- Requires the PESB to review and report on the preparation programs leading to professional certification.
- Requires the revocation or suspension of certification for a teacher who views sexually explicit material using school equipment or has possession of it on school grounds.

Hearing Date: March 17, 2005.

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 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 and efficiency for applicants.

Under the rules, professional certification would not be required until 2008-09. In addition, it would 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 would automatically receive professional certification. The rules must also allow any teacher currently enrolled in or participating in a program leading to professional certification to continue the program under 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 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. The institutions would also be encouraged to offer professional certificate coursework as continuing education credit hours. Institutions may also offer certification as part of a Master's Degree program. Criteria must be created to provide for a liaison relationship between approved programs and school districts in which applicants are employed.

The PESB must identify a process for out-of-state certificated teachers not yet certificated in Washington who have graduated from an accredited institution of higher education and who hold a valid out-of-state certificate to be granted reciprocity with a professional certificate. The PESB must consider in its process to grant reciprocity any additional coursework or assessments needed by out-of-state teachers to demonstrate skills commensurate with Washington requirements for professional certification.

An evaluation process of approved programs must be identified. The elements of the 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 those recently completing the program; and
- 4) a method for using program completer satisfaction responses in making the evaluation.

The State Board of Education will no longer have any policy authority over professional certification.

A school district employee must have his or her certificate or permit revoked or suspended upon a finding that the employee either has engaged in any unauthorized use of school equipment to intentionally access any material depicting sexually explicit conduct or has intentionally possessed on school grounds any material depicting sexually explicit conduct. Reference to the current statutory definition of sexually explicit conduct is included. An exception for material used in conjunction with established curriculum is included. A first time offense can result in either suspension or revocation and a second offense results in mandatory revocation of the certificate. A person whose certificate is in question must be given the opportunity to be heard and has the right to appeal. These provisions are only applicable to findings that occur after the effective date of the act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 15, 2005.

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