

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6171

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Education

Title: An act relating to preparing bilingual and special education teachers.

Brief Description: Creating a demonstration project to help prepare bilingual and special education teachers.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Schmidt, Rasmussen and Kohl-Welles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education & Workforce Education: 2/17/06, 2/23/06 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a demonstration project to help classified public K-12 school employees earn a teaching certificate with an endorsement in bilingual or special education.
- Provides classified employees who are seeking endorsement in special or bilingual education with conditional scholarships through the Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship Program and Loan Repayment Program, or through one of the alternative routes to teacher certification.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Rodne, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buri, Dunn, Fromhold, Hasegawa, Ormsby, Priest, Roberts and Sommers.

Staff: Sarah Ream (786-7303).

Background:

Shortage of Special Education and Bilingual Teachers

According to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), vacancies for special education teachers are the highest for any endorsement area in Washington. Likewise, the number of pending retirements indicates that special education will continue to be a major shortage area.

Bilingual educators are also in demand, although the shortage is not as severe as in special education, and tends to vary based between geographic areas of the state. In eight out of the state's nine educational service districts (ESDs), there is some shortage or a considerable shortage in bilingual educators. Only in ESD 101 (Spokane) is the number of bilingual educators balanced with the number of positions for bilingual educators. According to the OSPI, five ESDs have a "considerable shortage" of bilingual educators. These ESDs are: 112 (southwest Washington), 113 (Grays Harbor and Thurston counties and surrounding areas), 114 (Olympic Peninsula), 123 (southeast Washington), and 189 (northwest Washington).

Classified School Employees

Classified school employees are school personnel who do not hold a professional education certificate issued by the OSPI, or who are employed by a school district in a position that does not require such a certificate. It is believed that classified employees, who have already expressed a commitment and interest in working for the public schools, are good candidates for certification in bilingual and special education.

Three alternative routes exist to earn teacher certification, two of which are specific to classified school employees. Prospective teacher candidates using one of these alternative routes can earn certification in a shorter time than through a traditional program.

In 2000 and 2001, the Legislature provided \$1 million to fund a conditional scholarship demonstration project for classified employees to become teachers. This program has not been funded since 2001.

Conditional Teacher's Scholarship Program

The Legislature has funded a statutory Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship Program. In 2005-07, the Legislature provided \$500,000 for the program. This program is open to anyone seeking a teaching certificate, although priority has generally been given to participants seeking certification or an endorsement in math, science, technology, special education, bilingual education, or participants willing to work in a shortage area.

Summary of Bill:

A demonstration project is created that helps classified public K-12 school employees earn a teaching certificate with an endorsement in bilingual or special education. This project will provide conditional scholarships through the Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship Program and Loan Repayment Program, or through one of the alternative routes to teacher certification.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) will submit findings by January 2008, to the Legislature and the Governor about the impact of this demonstration project on entrants into the teaching profession in the shortage areas of bilingual education and special education.

The Alternative Route Conditional Scholarship Program (Alternative Route Program) and the Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship Program are amended to allow the funds provided

for the demonstration project to be distributed within the applicable rules, as determined appropriate by the HECB in consultation with the Professional Educators Standards Board.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The state needs more special education and bilingual teachers. About four years ago the Legislature put in \$1 million for scholarships for teachers in special education, math, science and bilingual education. There were 442 applicants for the scholarships. Of this number 246 applicants were awarded scholarships. Ninety-five percent of these people graduated and have become teachers; the other 5 percent are still finishing their studies. At the time, Washington did not have the Alternative Route Program. As a consequence, classified school employees who wanted to earn a teaching certificate had to quit their jobs and lose their health care coverage to go to school.

Classified staff work with the students in bilingual programs and special education and love working with the children. With the Alternative Route Program, classified employees can earn a certificate without having to quit their jobs. Thirty-seven percent of the participants in the Alternative Route Program are classified staff, and there are two or three times as many applicants for awards as there are awards. The Alternative Route Program is also less expensive than campus-based programs.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Senator McAuliffe, sponsor; Nasue Nishida, Professional Educator Standards Board; and John Klacik, Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.