

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5983

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, March 2, 2005

Title: An act relating to professional certification of teachers.

Brief Description: Regarding professional certification of teachers.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 2/28/05, 3/2/05 [DPS-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5983 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Mulliken, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

Staff: Brian Jeffries (786-7422)

Background: Under current law, the State Board of Education (SBE) has the authority to approve or disapprove the program of courses leading to teacher, school administrator, and school specialized personnel certification offered by all accredited institutions of higher education in the state. The board must conduct a review every five years of the program approval standards, including the minimum standards for teacher, administrators, and educational staff associates, to reflect research findings and to assure continued improvement in the programs.

The State Board of Education in 1997 adopted rules for the professional certification programs. The rules became effective in 2000. When rules for professional certification were adopted, only institutions of higher education that are approved to offer residency preparation programs for teachers and principals/program administrators were eligible to offer programs leading to professional certification for teachers and principals/program administrators.

The SBE-adopted rules consist of the establishment of a professional education advisory board for each professional certification preparation program and standards for program approval, program accountability, program resources, program design, and candidate knowledge and skills.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Professional Educators Standards Board (PESB) must adopt rules to provide for the approval and disapproval of programs leading to the professional certification of teachers. The rules must be written to allow the maximum

program choice for applicants and must promote maximum efficiency for applicants in attaining professional certification. All current and future programs must comply with these rules and must receive initial approval based on these rules.

Under the rules to be written by the PESB, professional certification would not be required until 2008-09, not be required before the fifth year following the receipt of a continuing employment contract for any individual teacher, and not require any teacher with national board certification to earn a professional certificate. 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 and disapproval 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. This must not prevent an institution of higher education from providing the option of including the professional certification requirements 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 board 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 that includes a review of the program coursework and applicant coursework load requirements, linkages of programs to individual teacher professional growth plans, linkages to school district and school improvement plans, and, to the extent possible, linkages to school district professional enrichment and growth programs for teachers, where such programs are in place in school districts. The board must identify:

- 1) a process for awarding conditional approval of a program that must include annual evaluations of the program until the program is awarded full approval;
- 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 would not have any policy authority over professional certification.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 28, 2005.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: There has been a loud outcry from teachers and districts regarding the way the current professional certification is being implemented in the state. Some institutions are able to offer a quality program at a relatively low cost to teachers. Some programs are very costly to teachers, both in time and money. There is no consistency across the state. Teachers are considering leaving the profession over how professional certification is handled. Many teachers do not see how professional certification helps them become better teachers, and do not see how it helps their students. Too many of the professional certification requirements are not relevant to the classrooms in which these teachers are teaching.

Testimony Against: The State Board of Education has the authority to fix many of the concerns regarding professional certification under their current authority. OSPI, with the SBE, has been working with the administrators of the institutions of higher education to address the issues of accountability, consistency and uniformity of the program, and quality of the program. The institutions have heard the message loud and clear from teachers, districts, and the state regarding the problems with the current implementation of professional certification and are working together and with OSPI and the SBE to fix these concerns. Certification should not be split between two agencies. If professional certification is to be moved to the PESB, then all certification policy authority should be moved, not just professional certification. Competency-based professional development and certification of teachers is very important to teachers and to students — professional certification should not be dismantled.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Cheryl Pflug, prime sponsor; Janet Barry, Issaquah School District; Nancy Skerritt, Tahoma School District; Lucinda Young, WEA; Jennifer Wallace, PESB; John Hellwich, PLU.

CON: Megan Atkinson, OSPI; Mary Jo Larsen, OSPI; Dan Bishop, SPU; Steve Siera, St. Martin's College; Larry Davis, SBE; Jeanne Harmon, Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession.