

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5956

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As of February 9, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to professional teacher certification tuition reimbursement.

**Brief Description:** Creating a professional teacher certification tuition reimbursement program.

**Sponsors:** Senators Tom, Brandland, McAuliffe, Oemig, Kilmer, Clements, Benton and Kohl-Welles.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/08/07.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Staff:** Eric Bratton (786-7438)

**Background:** The Professional Certificate is the second certificate in the teacher certification process. All beginning teachers, and most teachers from out-of-state, receive Residency Certificates as their first Washington teaching certificate. The Residency certificate is valid for five years; however, during that five-year period, teachers must earn their Professional Certificate. The most common way for teachers to earn their Professional Certificate is to complete a Professional Certificate Program at a college or university. While the programs may vary from school to school, certain elements are common to all programs, including having to take approximately 15 quarter (10 semester) credits of college coursework.

**Summary of Bill:** Teachers that take college courses as a requirement for obtaining their professional certification can apply for full or partial tuition reimbursements from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). A teacher completing coursework at a public institution of higher education will be entitled to a reimbursement of the actual tuition and fees paid by the teacher. A teacher completing coursework at a private institution of higher education will be entitled to a reimbursement amount based on the average of the tuition and fees charged for comparable coursework at a regional university defined by statute.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 7, 2006.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This bill honors teachers. By offering to support teachers in obtaining their Professional Certification, it sends the message that we value what they do for students. It would also be a good recruiting tool. Currently, obtaining a Professional Certification is just one more cost placed upon teachers that might be at the breaking point. Teachers need to feel a sense of worth for all of the work they do and tuition reimbursement sends that message. The Professional Certification program is important in helping teachers grow and become better teachers. Several different areas of the state don't have access to Professional Certification programs at public schools and this needs to be considered. The Legislature should consider providing permanent bonuses with Professional Certification. The Professional Educator Standards Board suggested several technical amendments.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Tom, prime sponsor; Lynn Olson, Tacoma Public Schools; Melissa Franz, Lake Washington School District; Christie Christman, South Kitsap School District; Nasue Nishida, Professional Educator Standards Board; Kyra Kestner, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.