

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5667

As of February 21, 2011

Title: An act relating to recruiting, preparing, and empowering school officials and holding them accountable.

Brief Description: Establishing a residency provisional principal certification.

Sponsors: Senators Tom, Litzow, Hobbs and King.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/21/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Juliana Roe (786-7438)

Background: To become certified as a school principal in Washington, individuals must have previously been certified as a teacher, have school-based experience in an instructional role, hold a master's degree, and complete a residency principal certification program approved by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB).

Principal certification programs must meet operational standards for accountability, program governance, program design, and have an advisory board. Programs must also provide evidence that their candidates demonstrate performance-based standards for knowledge and skills and educational leadership that have been established by the PESB. Principal candidates are also required to serve an internship of at least 540 hours during their certification program.

There are currently 14 PESB-approved principal certification programs, all offered by institutions of higher education.

Since 2001 the PESB has approved partnerships of educator preparation program providers and school districts to offer alternative route preparation of teachers. Alternative route programs are intended to attract non-traditional teacher candidates, including para-educators and other school staff seeking to become certified as teachers and mid-career professionals. Alternative route programs typically combine extensive field-based experience, intensive mentoring, and supplemental coursework that is often offered during the summer, in the evenings, and on weekends. Some programs are designed to have the teacher candidate

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employed under a conditional teacher certificate while in the program. Conditional certificates are issued at the request of a school district, for a particular assignment, and for a limited time period.

Organizations such as New Teachers for New Schools and large urban school districts such as Chicago, New York, and Boston have developed alternative route principal preparation programs. These programs focus on extensive field-based experience, mentoring, and supplemental coursework and professional development with the intent of attracting non-traditional principal candidates, particularly for inner city and hard-to-serve schools. Most conduct rigorous screening of candidates and require demonstration of previous leadership experience.

Legislation enacted in 2010 requires the PESB to consider applications from non-higher education preparation program providers, including for principal certification. To date, none have applied. There currently is no conditional principal certificate as there is for teachers, nor are there separate provisions in law or rule for alternative route preparation for principals.

The same 2010 legislation established a new standard for school districts to transfer principals to a subordinate position after three years of employment as a principal, based on the superintendent's determination that the results of the principals' performance evaluation provide a valid reason for the transfer. No probationary period is required, but support and an attempt at remediation are required. A final decision by the school board to transfer the principal cannot be appealed. These provisions apply only in school districts with more than 35,000 students and to principals hired after June 10, 2010. For other school districts, principals can be transferred to a subordinate position only within the first three years of employment as a principal. Otherwise, this would constitute an adverse action against the principal's contract.

Summary of Bill: The PESB must establish a Residency Provisional principal certification (Provisional Certification). Applicants for Provisional Certification must (1) document professional managerial and leadership experience that meets standards established by the PESB; (2) complete a record and background check; (3) have been admitted to a PESB-approved alternative route principal certification program (program); and (4) be recommended by a school district superintendent.

The PESB adopts standards for the required professional managerial and leadership experiences, which is not required to have occurred in a school setting.

Before recommending candidates for Provisional Certification, school district superintendents must conduct a publicly announced search for the principalship of a specific school and accept applications from persons seeking Provisional Certification and from regularly-certified principals.

Provisional Certificate holders may serve as a school principal only in a single district for not more than three years and must be enrolled in an approved program. Once a Provisional Certificate holder successfully completes the Program, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction issues a regular residence principal certificate. Principals certified under these provisions are not required to have teaching certificates.

The PESB must adopt standards for approval of programs, which can be offered by institutions of higher education or non-higher education program providers. Program providers must (1) operate the Program in partnership with school districts; (2) develop and use a principal development plan for each candidate that places significant weight on the candidate's prior experience; (3) require candidates to demonstrate the performance-based standards for knowledge and skills and educational leadership for residency certification established by the PESB; (4) provide intensive mentoring of at least one-half year with additional time if necessary; and (5) demonstrate a record of success in principal preparation, or if a new program, submit a record of success in preparation of other educators and the appropriate knowledge of faculty and instructors.

School district boards of directors and superintendents are encouraged to provide principals with increased autonomy and decision-making authority, including over personnel and budgets in their schools.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

[OFM requested ten-year cost projection pursuant to I-960.]

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The PESB has already commissioned a workgroup to tackle the issue of alternative principal certification. We recognize that there may be a problem in this area. The workgroup will conclude its work in one year. The Legislature should wait until the work is complete before taking action on this issue.

Quality educators do not necessarily come from normal avenues. Schools need excellent leaders. This bill would expand the pool of potential leaders for schools. It encourages highly capable individuals from outside the education world to infuse education with new ideas. Pairing flexibility with checks for accountability ensure that alternative route principals will be strong leaders.

CON: Schools should be fully funded before looking at alternative ways in which to attract principals. In order to be successful, we need better support for teachers and leadership.

In order to be a great principal, it's important to be a great teacher. Having teaching experience provides principals with credibility. You should not just put someone into the job as a principal because they are a good leader. If a person is a great principal, it doesn't mean that that person would be a good hospital administrator. There is a great amount of background experience that is necessary to be successful in either of those positions.

An accomplished leader and educator is important in a principal. We need someone with the ability to provide instructional coaching, someone who is knowledgeable in current research

and practices, can provide constructive feedback, and can guide and mentor. First hand experience leads to success.

Principals have been moved into the role of instructional leaders. If principals have no experience in classroom or schools it will be difficult to meet that part of their role.

OTHER: Principals require experience in school settings to be effective. To choose a person based solely on managerial experience is not the proper way to address this issue.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Heather Cope, League of Education Voters; David Brenna, PESB; Anne Luce, Partnership for Learning; George Allen, Greater Seattle Chamber; Dave Powell, Stand for Children.

CON: Greg Lynch, Central Kitsap School District; Andrea Gamboa, Teacher; Lucinda Young, WA Education Assn.; Jerry Bender, Assn. of WA School Principals; Jason Perrins, Prairie High School; Ben Talbert, Rainier Middle School.

OTHER: Bob Cooper, Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; Live Finne, Washington Policy Center.