

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6152

As of January 24, 2014

Title: An act relating to changing explicit alternative routes to teacher certification program requirements to expectations for program outcomes.

Brief Description: Changing explicit alternative routes to teacher certification program requirements to expectations for program outcomes.

Sponsors: Senators Litzow and McAuliffe; by request of Professional Educator Standards Board.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/24/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Eric Wolf (786-7405)

Background: The Alternative Routes Partnership Grant Program, established in 2002, is operated by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB). It provides support for the formation of partnerships between school districts and higher education teacher preparation programs to offer one or more of four school-based alternative routes to teacher certification. The programs are aimed at experienced paraeducators and mid-career professionals with expertise in subject areas in which Washington has shortages, such as math, science, and special education.

Eligibility for Alternative Route One. Alternative Route One programs enroll currently employed classified instructional employees with transferable associate degrees seeking residency teacher certification with endorsements in special education, bilingual education, or English as a second language. It is anticipated that candidates enrolled in this route will complete both their baccalaureate degree and requirements for residency certification in two years or less, including a mentored internship to be completed in the final year. In addition, partnership programs uphold entry requirements for candidates that include the following:

- district or building validation of qualifications, including one year of successful student interaction and leadership as a classified instructional employee;
- successful passage of the statewide basic skills exam; and
- meeting the age, good moral character, and personal fitness requirements adopted by rule for teachers.

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.

Eligibility for Alternative Route Two. Alternative Route Two programs enroll currently employed classified staff with baccalaureate degrees seeking residency teacher certification in subject matter shortage areas and areas with shortages due to geographic location. Candidates enrolled in this route must complete a mentored internship complemented by flexibly scheduled training and coursework offered at a local site, such as a school or educational service district, or online or via video conference, in collaboration with the partnership program's higher education partner. In addition, partnership grant programs uphold entry requirements for candidates that include the following:

- district or building validation of qualifications, including one year of successful student interaction and leadership as classified staff;
- a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education; the individual's college or university grade point average may be considered as a selection factor;
- successful completion of the required subject matter assessment;
- meeting the age, good moral character, and personal fitness requirements adopted by rule for teachers; and
- successful passage of the statewide basic skills exam.

Eligibility for Alternative Route Three. Alternative Route Three programs enroll individuals with baccalaureate degrees who are not employed in the district at the time of application. When selecting candidates for certification through route three, districts and approved preparation program providers give priority to individuals who are seeking residency teacher certification in subject matter shortage areas or areas with shortages due to geographic locations. Cohorts of candidates for this route attend an intensive summer teaching academy, followed by a full year employed by a district in a mentored internship, followed, if necessary, by a second summer teaching academy. In addition, partnership programs uphold entry requirements for candidates that include the following:

- a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education; the individual's grade point average may be considered as a selection factor;
- successful completion of the required subject matter assessment;
- external validation of qualifications, including demonstrated successful experience with students or children, such as reference letters and letters of support from previous employers;
- meeting the age, good moral character, and personal fitness requirements adopted by rule for teachers; and
- successful passage of statewide basic skills exam.

Eligibility for Alternative Route Four. Alternative Route Four programs enroll individuals with baccalaureate degrees who are employed in the district at the time of application or who hold conditional teaching certificates or emergency substitute certificates. Cohorts of candidates for this route must attend an intensive summer teaching academy, followed by a full year of employment with a district in a mentored internship. If employed on a conditional certificate, the intern may serve as the teacher of record, supported by a well-trained mentor. In addition, partnership programs must uphold entry requirements for candidates that include the following:

- a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education; the individual's grade point average may be considered as a selection factor;

- successful completion of the required subject matter assessment;
- external validation of qualifications, including demonstrated successful experience with students or children, such as reference letters and letters of support from previous employers;
- meeting the age, good moral character, and personal fitness requirements adopted by rule for teachers; and
- successful passage of statewide basic skills exam.

Veterans and national guard members who meet the entry requirements for an alternative route program are given preference in admissions to all alternative route programs.

School districts may partner with the higher education teachers' preparation programs to provide one or more of the alternative route programs. At the completion of the program, successful candidates will be eligible for teacher certification.

Summary of Bill: The four specific alternative route pathways to teacher certification are eliminated. Instead PESB is allowed to establish policies based on expectations for program outcomes. A new framework is created for PESB's approval of new nontraditional teacher preparation programs and PESB must provide oversight and accountability related to the quality of such programs.

When establishing and amending rules related to alternative route programs, PESB must:

- uphold criteria for alternative route program designs that are innovative and reflect evidence-based practices;
- continue to prioritize program designs tailored to the needs of experienced paraeducators and candidates of high academic attainment in the subject area they intend to teach;
- expand access and opportunity for individuals to become teachers statewide; and
- give preference in admissions to applicants who are eligible veterans or national guard members.

Beginning December 1, 2014, and each even-numbered year thereafter, PESB must submit a report to the education committees of the Legislature on how approved alternative route programs are meeting the Legislature's intent that PESB provides oversight and regulation of such programs, focusing the following data:

- the percentage of alternative route completers hired versus all preparation program completers;
- the percentage of alternative route completers from underrepresented populations compared to all preparation program completers;
- three-year and five-year retention rates of alternative route completers compared to all preparation program completers;
- the average hiring dates of alternative route completers compared to all preparation program completers; and
- the percentage of alternative route completers hired in districts where their alternative route program was completed compared to where student teaching was completed by candidates in all other preparation programs.

Alternative route partnership programs proposed by school districts must receive priority eligibility for partnership grants from PESB to recruit paraeducators and other individuals in the local community to become certified as teachers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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 alternative route program provides great field-based experience for those seeking teacher certification, particularly paraeducators. This is the only area of program design concerning PESB that resides in statute instead of rules, and PESB would rather have these changes in rules, as the bill does. PESB would like to instead report to the Legislatures specific outcomes from alternative route programs and would like to ensure that the outcomes in the bill reflect the Legislature's intent for the programs. The Legislature has always held that their number one concern is that alternative route programs would be equal in rigor to traditional teacher preparation programs. The alternative route program has brought people from other fields into the teaching profession; often professionals in areas of critical need such as mathematics and science.

OTHER: The Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education supports the operative aspects of the bill and the bill's demand that approved alternative route programs be evidence based. But their problems are in the metrics PESB must report to the Legislature; some of the comparisons are apples to oranges comparisons between alternative route completers and teacher preparation program completers. It is difficult to track when alternative program completers obtain a teaching certificate and then move out of state.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Jennifer Wallace, PESB; Lucinda Young, WA Education Assn.

OTHER: Bob Cooper, WA Assn. of Colleges for Teacher Education.