
Education Committee

HB 1983

Brief Description: Creating the TEACH pilot project of financial assistance for teachers taking basic skills and content tests for teacher certification programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Pollet, Zeiger, S. Hunt, Haler and Bergquist.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Teacher Endorsement and Certification Help pilot project, known as the TEACH pilot, subject to funds specifically appropriated for the purpose.
- Provides that the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), in collaboration with the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), must award TEACH grants to students who meet certain qualifications to cover the costs of basic skills and content tests required for teacher certification.
- Requires the WSAC and the PESB to submit reports to the Legislature that detail the effectiveness and costs of the pilot.

Hearing Date: 3/12/15

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

Basic Skills and Content Tests for Teacher Certification.

To obtain a teacher certificate, candidates must pass a basic skills test that includes at least reading, writing, and mathematics. Each teacher certificate must include at least one endorsement. An endorsement identifies the subject matter and grade levels that the certificate holder is allowed to teach. Expertise in a subject can be established by passage of a content knowledge test.

With the exception of a few candidates, Washington's 21 approved teacher preparation programs require candidates to pass a basic skills test prior to admittance, and a content knowledge test prior to applying for certification.

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.

Basic skills test fees range from \$155 to \$225, and content knowledge test fees range from \$95 to \$155. Some candidates choose to take more than one content knowledge test.

Teacher Shortage Areas.

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) measures teacher shortages by looking at how quickly teachers find teaching positions in Washington's public schools. In general, teachers with multiple endorsements are more likely to be hired than teachers with a single endorsement. Currently teachers with a special education endorsement and with science and math endorsements tend to be hired more quickly than teachers with social studies, history, or English language arts.

Retooling to Teach Mathematics and Sciences Conditional Scholarship Program.

The PESB offers conditional scholarships to current K-12 teachers and those with elementary educator certificates, who are not employed in a position requiring an elementary education certificate, to pursue an endorsement in math or science. The conditional scholarship is a loan that is forgiven for teaching service in a Washington state K-12 public school in the endorsement area added through the program. Each candidate is allowed up to \$3,000 per scholarship, per fiscal year, to pay for content test fees, administration of the pedagogy assessment, and tuition.

Washington Student Achievement Council.

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) was created by the Legislature in 2012 to provide strategic planning, oversight, advocacy, and programs to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment in Washington. The WSAC administers the majority of the state's student financial aid programs and is the fiscal agent for the Educator Retooling program.

Summary of Bill:

The Teacher Endorsement and Certification Help pilot project, known as the TEACH pilot, is created. The TEACH pilot grant awards cover the costs of basic skills and content tests required for teacher certification and endorsement. The number of TEACH pilot grant award must be scaled to the amount of funds appropriated for this purpose.

The WSAC, after consultation with the PESB, must adopt rules to administer the TEACH pilot by August 1, 2015. The rules must include:

- a TEACH pilot grant application process;
- a financial need verification process;
- the order of priority in which the applications will be approved; and
- a process for disbursing TEACH pilot grant awards to selected applicants.

Beginning September 1, 2015, the WSAC, in collaboration with the PESB, must award a TEACH pilot grant to eligible students. To be eligible a student must:

- be enrolled in, have applied to, or have completed a teacher preparation program approved by the PESB;
- show a financial need, as demonstrated by the student's eligibility to receive the State Need Grant;
- apply for a TEACH pilot grant; and

- register for an endorsement competency test in endorsement shortage areas.
- The WSAC must prioritize TEACH pilot grant awards first to eligible students registered for competency tests in endorsement shortage areas and second to eligible students with greatest financial need.

The WSAC and the PESB must include information about the TEACH pilot in materials distributed to schools and students.

The WSAC, in collaboration with the PESB, must submit a preliminary report to the Legislature by December 31, 2018, and a final report by December 31, 2020. The preliminary report must (a) compare the numbers and demographic information of students taking and passing tests in the endorsement shortage areas before and after implementation of the pilot, and (b) determine the amount of TEACH pilot grants awarded each pilot year and per student. In addition to updating the preliminary report, the final report must (a) compare the numbers and demographic information of students obtaining teaching certificates with endorsement competencies in the endorsement shortage areas before and after implementation of the pilot, and (b) recommend whether the pilot should be modified, continued, and expanded.

This section expires June 30, 2021.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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