
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

- Establishes, subject to funding, the Teacher Endorsement and Certification Help (TEACH) pilot project to assist qualified individuals with the costs of basic skills and content tests required for teacher certification and endorsement.
- Grants related rulemaking duties to the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC).
- Requires the WSAC and the Professional Educator Standards Board to submit a preliminary and final report on the TEACH pilot project to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2018, and December 31, 2020, respectively.
- Expires the TEACH pilot project on June 30, 2021.

Hearing Date: 1/18/16

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

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 that identifies the subject matter and grade levels that the certificate holder is authorized to teach. Expertise in a subject can be established by the passage of a content knowledge test.

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.

Washington State'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 with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Basic skills tests fees range from \$155 to \$225, and content knowledge test fees range from \$95 to \$155. Test takers must also pay a \$35 registration fee.

Washington Student Achievement Council Conditional Scholarship Programs.

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 conditional scholarship programs that forgive all or part of a loan awarded through a program in exchange for service in their endorsement area as a certificated teacher at a K-12 public school. While requirements and limitations vary by program, scholarship recipients may use awarded funds for the costs of tuition, fees, and educational expenses, including books, supplies, and transportation.

Teacher Shortage Areas.

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), the 11-member board charged with establishing policies and requirements for the preparation and certification of educators, measures teacher shortages by looking at how quickly teachers find teaching positions in Washington's public schools. According to the PESB, teachers with multiple endorsements are more likely to be hired than teachers with a single endorsement. The PESB has also indicated that teachers with a special education endorsement or with science and math endorsements are generally hired more quickly than teachers with social studies, history, or English language arts endorsements.

Summary of Bill:

The Teacher Endorsement and Certification Help (TEACH) pilot project is created to develop an expandable program that provides grants to teachers taking basic skills and content tests for teacher certification programs. The creation of the program is dependent upon funds being specifically appropriated by the Legislature for its establishment, and authorization for the project expires June 30, 2021.

The WSAC, after consultation with the PESB, is charged with developing and adopting rules to administer the TEACH pilot project. The rules must satisfy specified requirements including establishing grant application and financial need verification processes.

To qualify for financial assistance under the TEACH pilot project, an applicant 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; and
- register for an endorsement competency test in endorsement shortage areas.

Grant funds awarded under the TEACH pilot project must cover the costs of basic skills and content tests required for teacher certification. In awarding funds, the WASC must prioritize grant awards first, to applicants registered for competency tests in endorsement shortage areas

and second, to applicants with the greatest financial need. The WASC is required to scale the number of TEACH pilot grant awards to the amount of appropriated funds.

The WSAC, in collaboration with the PESB, must submit a preliminary report to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 31, 2018 that details the effectiveness and costs of the TEACH pilot project. The preliminary report must comply with specific requirements, including comparing the numbers and demographic information of students taking and passing tests in the endorsement shortage areas before and after implementation of the TEACH pilot project. A final report that details the effectiveness and costs of the TEACH pilot project and includes a recommendation as to whether the pilot project should be modified, continued, or expanded is due to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 31, 2020.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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