
Education Committee

HB 2921

Brief Description: Expanding the professional educator workforce by increasing career opportunities in education, creating a more robust enrollment forecasting, and enhancing recruitment efforts.

Sponsors: Representatives Hickel, Stambaugh, Zeiger, Caldier, Kochmar, Haler, Magendanz and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires a comprehensive, statewide initiative to increase the number of qualified individuals who apply for teaching positions in Washington, including a teacher recruitment campaign and website, and a web-based application depository accessible by school districts
- Requires that the Professional Certificate be issued to experienced out-of-state teachers who meet certain requirements.
- Expands the Educator Retooling Conditional Scholarship to teachers pursuing endorsements in elementary education or early childhood education.
- Provides that certain retired teachers may be employed as substitute teachers without a suspension of pension benefits, for a limited time.
- Specifies that "caseload" for purposes of caseload forecasts of common school students includes school district and statewide caseloads.
- Appropriates funds to the Alternate Route and Educator Retooling programs.

Hearing Date: 2/11/16

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

Superintendent of Public Instruction.

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.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is the primary agency charged with overseeing K-12 public education in Washington. The OSPI provides leadership and support for educators to ensure engaged and effective teaching and learning for all students in public schools.

Employment Security Department.

The Employment Security Department provides employment services, including career research, job search tips, job listings, and a resume depository.

Teacher Preparation, Certification, and Endorsement.

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), a thirteen member board, is responsible for the policy and oversight of Washington's system of educator preparation and certification. The PESB has approved residency teacher preparation programs at 21 institutions of higher education. Some programs offer certificates, while other programs offer bachelor's, master's, or doctor's degrees.

Teaching Certificates. There are two levels of teacher certification: (1) residency, which requires completion of an approved teacher preparation program; and (2) professional, which requires a minimum of two years of experience, and either completion of an external, uniform assessment adopted by the PESB, called the ProTeach Portfolio, or completion of a certificate from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, called a National Board Certificate (NBC). A teacher can only apply for the rigorous NBC after attaining three years of experience. Teachers coming from out-of-state with a NBC are awarded the Professional Certificate.

Teacher Shortage Areas. The PESB designates official shortage areas based on periodic analysis of educator supply and demand in Washington. An endorsement is the subject area in which a certified educator is authorized to teach, along with designated grade levels for that area. There are 39 endorsements in Washington, not including a large number of career and technical education endorsements. The current endorsement shortage areas, as defined by the PESB, include: special education, mathematics, and science.

Alternate Route Programs. The Alternate Route to Residency Certification programs (Alternate Route programs) are designed to fill subject matter or geographic need shortage areas by allowing individuals with work and life experience to segue into teaching through flexible, expedient teacher preparation programs. In these programs, school districts, or districts in cooperation with an Educational Service District (ESD), work in partnership with teacher preparation programs to offer shortened, field-based preparation programs with a mentored internship. There are Alternate Route programs at eight higher education institutions.

Educator Retooling Conditional Scholarship. The Educator Retooling Conditional Scholarship (Educator Retooling) program is limited to current K-12 teachers. In order to receive conditional scholarship awards teachers and individuals certificated with an elementary education endorsement must pursue an endorsement in a subject or geographic endorsement shortage area, as defined by the PESB (endorsement shortage area), including mathematics, science, special education, bilingual education, English language learner, computer science education, or environmental and sustainability education. The annual scholarship, which may not exceed \$3,000, is for the cost of tuition, test fees, and educational expenses, including books, supplies, and transportation for the endorsement pathway being pursued.

Postretirement Employment Options.

Washington retirement systems have various rules relating to the conditions under which a retiree may return to work for a retirement system-participating employer and continue to receive pension benefits. For members of the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS), pension benefits will generally be suspended after a member works for more than 867 hours per year with a participating employer. The TRS Plans 2 and 3 have an unreduced retirement age of 65. Early retirement benefits begin at age 55 with 20 or 10 years of service, respectively. An improved early retirement formula, or factor, (ERF) was established in 2000, to permit members with 30 years of service to receive a pension reduced by 3 percent per year from age 65 to the member's age at retirement, rather than a full actuarial reduction. Members retiring under this provision are able to work for up to 867 hours per year without suspension of benefits, just like those retiring at age 65. Another ERF was established in 2008 that allows members to retire with unreduced pensions beginning at age 62, but members are unable to work for a state retirement system employer until age 65 without immediate suspension of benefits. In 2012 an ERF for certain members hired after May 1, 2013 was established that would reduce benefits for early retirees by 5 percent per year – more than the earlier ERF formulas - but also allow retired members to work for up to first 867 hours per year without suspension of benefits.

Caseload Forecast Council.

The Caseload Forecast Council (CFC) is a statutory body, made up of four Legislators and two Governor appointees, that oversees the preparation and approval of the official state caseload forecasts. The caseloads forecast by the CTC include the number of persons expected to meet entitlement requirements and require the services of public assistance programs, state correctional institutions, medical assistance programs, and the common school system.

The K-12 Basic Education forecast is composed of K-12 Basic Education and Running Start enrollments, as well as enrollment generated by the University of Washington Transition Program, Open Door Dropout Reengagement Program, summer school, and private and home-schooled students receiving ancillary services from public schools. In general, K-12 enrollment is forecast in as a ten month average of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) enrollments, where one FTE is the equivalent of one student enrolled full time.

The CFC also forecasts enrollments by headcount for the Bilingual Education program and the Special Education program.

Summary of Bill:

Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The OSPI, in consultation with school districts, ESDs, and other state agencies, must develop and implement a comprehensive, statewide initiative to increase the number of qualified individuals who apply for teaching positions in Washington. In developing and implementing the initiative, the OSPI, in partnership with the Employment Security Department, must:

- develop and implement a teacher recruitment campaign that targets individuals with teaching certificates who are not employed as teachers, undergraduate college students who have not chosen a major, out-of-state teachers, military personnel and their spouses, and other groups of individuals who may be interested in teaching in Washington public schools;

- incorporate certificated positions into the Employment Security Department's existing web-based depository for job applications that allows for access by school districts in the state for purposes of hiring teachers and other certificated positions; and
- create or enhance an existing website that provides useful information to individuals who are interested in teaching in Washington.

This section expires July 1, 2018.

Out-of-state Teachers.

A Professional Certificate must be issued to out-of-state teachers with five or more years of successful teaching experience if:

- The teacher holds a valid NBC; or
- The teacher has a second-level teacher certificate from another state.

Educator Retooling Conditional Scholarship.

Teachers pursuing endorsements in elementary education or early childhood education are made eligible for the Educator Retooling program.

Postretirement Employment Options.

Beginning July 1, 2016, and until June 30, 2018, certain teachers who have retired under the alternate early retirement provisions may be employed as substitute teachers without a suspension of pension benefits.

Caseload Forecast Council.

It is specified that the caseload forecast for the number of persons expected to meet entitlement requirements in the common school system must be: by school district and in total statewide. When determining district level forecasts, the CFC must consider a geographic information system solution and providing districts the ability to adjust the final forecast.

Appropriation: The sum of \$1 million from the State General Fund to the PESB for the Alternative Route and Educator Retooling programs.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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