

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5496

As Passed Senate, March 3, 2015

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, McAuliffe, Dammeier, Rolfes and Chase; by request of Professional Educator Standards Board.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/03/15, 2/12/15 [DP].
Passed Senate: 3/03/15, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Litzow, Chair; Dammeier, Vice Chair; McAuliffe, Ranking Member; Billig, Fain, Mullet, Rivers and Rolfes.

Staff: Matthew Lemon (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.

Alternative Route One. Alternative Route One programs enroll currently employed classified instructional employees (paraeducators) with a transferable associate degree who are seeking teacher certification with an endorsement in special education, bilingual education, or English as a second language. Candidates pursuing this route are expected to complete both their baccalaureate degree and requirements for residency certification in two years or less, including a mentored internship in the final year. Entry requirements for candidates include the following:

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

Alternative Route Two. Alternative Route Two programs enroll currently employed classified staff with a baccalaureate degree who are seeking teacher certification in subject matter or geographic shortage areas. Candidates pursuing this route must complete a mentored internship and training and coursework offered at a local site, online, or via video conference. Entry requirements for candidates 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;
- meeting the age, good moral character, and personal fitness requirements adopted by rule for teachers;
- successful completion of the required subject matter assessment; and
- successful passage of the statewide basic skills exam.

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, priority is given to individuals who are seeking teacher certification in subject matter or geographic shortage areas. Candidates pursuing 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. Entry requirements for candidates include the following:

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

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. Candidates pursuing 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. Entry requirements for candidates include the following:

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

Veterans and National Guard members who meet the entry 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 removed from statute. 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. PESB must also develop rules to address the grant process and scholarship eligibility.

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;
- ensure that approved partnerships reflect district engagement in their resident alternative route program as an integral part of their future workforce development and school and student learning improvement strategies;
- amend or adopt rules issuing preservice residents certification necessary to serve as substitute teachers in classrooms within the residency school for up to ten days per school year;
- 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, 2015, and each odd-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 on the following data:

- the number and percentage of alternative route completers hired;
- the percentage of alternative route completers from underrepresented populations;
- three-year and five-year retention rates of alternative route completers;

- the average hiring dates of alternative route completers; and
- the percentage of alternative route completers hired in districts where their alternative route program was completed.

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: Several changes and innovations in how teacher preparation works have occurred since 2001 due to alternative routes. The innovations that occurred are now embedded in traditional programs. Currently, everything down to eligibility for alternative routes is explicitly stated in statute. PESB would instead like to focus on an outcome approach in which PESB is permitted to create innovations and new strategies for training teachers without the handicaps of the explicit language in statute. This bill will also help address a lack of substitute teachers by clarifying that preservice teachers in an alternative route can serve as substitutes.

Persons Testifying: PRO: David Brenna, PESB.