

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center

C.S.S.B. 1511  
By: West  
Education  
4/19/2011  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Of the many school-based factors that affect a student's academic success, research shows that having access to an effective educator is the most important. Educator preparation and certification standards help ensure that teachers are appropriately trained to handle the rigors of the classroom and provide a quality education for their students. Such standards also help to reduce costly teacher turnover. High standards help ensure that prospective teachers have the necessary background knowledge, including content knowledge in the subject matter they will be teaching, to be successful in the classroom. The state's current minimum standards do not sufficiently ensure that the future teachers have the necessary foundation of knowledge to become highly effective and motivated to remain in the profession.

As a minimum standard for admission into an educator preparation program, the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) currently requires an overall grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.5 or at least 2.5 in the last 60 semester credit hours, and SBEC allows a program to waive the GPA requirement for up to 10 percent of its admitted candidates based on their work experience. Countries with education systems that are often considered superior to that in Texas tend to hold their prospective teachers to higher standards for entrance into the profession. In Finland, for example, eligibility to become a teacher is limited to the top 10 percent of high school graduates.

C.S.S.B.1511 amends current law relating to minimum standards for approval of educator preparation programs.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the State Board for Educator Certification in SECTION 1 (Section 21.044, Education Code) of this bill.

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the State Board for Educator Certification is modified in SECTION 3 (Section 21.048, Education Code) of this bill.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 21.044, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 21.044. EDUCATOR PREPARATION. (a) Creates this subsection from existing text. Requires the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) to propose rules specifying the minimum academic qualifications required for a certificate, rather than requiring SBEC to specify the minimum academic qualifications required for a certificate.

(b) Requires a person, in addition to satisfying applicable requirements and meeting applicable qualifications established under Subsection (a), to obtain a classroom teaching certificate, including a certificate qualifying a person to teach career and technical or special education classes, unless a certificate is awarded under Subsection (c), to:

(1) maintain an overall grade point average of at least 2.5 on a four-point scale or the equivalent while enrolled in an educator preparation program; or

(2) earn a grade point average of at least 2.5 on a four-point scale or the equivalent for the last 60 semester credit hours attempted at a public or private institution of higher education.

(c) Authorizes SBEC, based on extraordinary circumstances, as determined by SBEC in accordance with SBEC rule, to award a certificate to a person who would be eligible for a certificate if not for the person's failure to satisfy a grade point average requirement as specified under Subsection (b)(1) or (2). Prohibits SBEC, in any year, from awarding certificates under this subsection to more than five percent of an educator preparation program's candidates for certification for that year.

(d) Authorizes an educator preparation program to impose requirements or qualifications in addition to requirements and qualifications established under this section.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 21.045, Education Code, by adding Subsections (d) and (e), as follows:

(d) Requires that the performance standards under Subsection (c) (relating to requiring SBEC to propose rules establishing performance standards), include a requirement that an educator preparation program, including an undergraduate, alternative certification, or postbaccalaureate program, admit only an applicant for admission who:

(1) has, except as provided by Subsection (e):

(A) maintained an overall grade point average of at least 2.5 on a four-point scale or the equivalent on any course work previously attempted at a public or private institution of higher education; or

(B) earned a grade point average of at least 2.5 on a four-point scale or the equivalent for the last 60 semester credit hours attempted at a public or private institution of higher education;

(2) demonstrates, in a manner determined by SBEC, basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics;

(3) has successfully completed at least 18 semester credit hours in the subject-specific content area in which the applicant is pursuing certification; and

(4) if the applicant is seeking initial certification, has achieved a satisfactory level of performance on a content certification examination, which may be a content certification examination administered by a vendor approved by the commissioner of education for purposes of administering such an examination for the year for which the applicant is applying for admission to the program.

(e) Requires that the performance standards under Subsection (c) permit an educator preparation program to admit an applicant who fails to satisfy a grade point average requirement prescribed by Subsection (d)(1)(A) or (B), provided that:

(1) not more than five percent of the total number of applicants admitted to the program in a year fail to satisfy the requirement under Subsection (d)(1)(A) or (B); and

(2) for each applicant admitted as described by this subsection, the director of the program:

(A) determines, based on documentation provided by the applicant, that the applicant's work, business, or career experience demonstrates achievement; and

(B) maintains and makes available at the request of SBEC the documentation provided under Paragraph (A).

SECTION 3. Amends Section 21.048(a), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Requires SBEC to determine the satisfactory level of performance required for each certification examination. Requires SBEC to require a satisfactory level of examination performance in English, language arts, reading, mathematics, science, and social studies for the issuance of a generalist or multi-subject certificate.

SECTION 4. Amends Subsection A, Chapter 31, Education Code, by adding Section 21.008, as follows:

Sec. 21.008. BIENNIAL REPORT ON EDUCATORS. (a) Requires TEA, not later than December 1 of each even-numbered year, to prepare, publish, and submit to the legislature a report regarding public school staffing and the working conditions for public school educators. Requires that the report be posted on TEA's Internet website.

(b) Requires that the report contain, at a minimum, the following staffing information for each public school campus:

(1) the percentage of teachers assigned to teach subjects outside the teacher's area of certification or expertise;

(2) the percentage of teachers employed under emergency certificates;

(3) teacher turnover rates; and

(4) the number and percentage of teachers who have less than one year of teaching experience.

(c) Requires that the report contain information regarding working conditions in each school district on a statewide survey conducted by TEA of educators. Requires the survey, to encourage the uninhibited participation of educators, to be designed to prevent the disclosure of the identity of a survey participant. Requires TEA to include in the report recommendations for improving the working conditions at campuses identified by TEA, based on the results of the survey, as having poor working conditions.

(d) Directs the commissioner to seek private funding for creation, implementation, and analysis of the survey. Provides that implementation of this section is contingent upon securing funding.

SECTION 5. Provides that Sections 21.044 and 21.045, Education Code, as amended by this Act, apply only to a person admitted to an educator preparation program on or after January 1, 2012.

SECTION 6. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2011.