

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5479

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to time periods for provisional status of certificated employees.

Brief Description: Changing time periods for provisional status for certificated employees.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators Benton, West, Hochstatter, Swecker, McDonald and Oke).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/19/98, 2/26/98 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Smith; Sterk; Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Quall and Veloria.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background: During the first two years of employment in a school district, most teachers and non-supervisory certificated staff have provisional employment status. Teachers and non-supervisory certificated employees who have two or more years of certificated work experience in another Washington school district have provisional status for one year instead of two. The school district superintendent must evaluate provisional employees annually. The evaluation includes the following issues: instruction, classroom management, professional preparation and scholarship, any needed improvement, the ability to handle discipline and attendance problems, interest in teaching students, and subject matter knowledge. District superintendents may exercise the option not to renew the contracts of provisional teachers or non-supervisory certificated employees, subject to appropriate notification of reasons and due process requirements.

Summary of Bill: Most teachers and other non-supervisory certificated staff are provisional district employees during the first three years of employment. An exception remains for new hires with two or more years certificated work experience in another Washington school district; their provisional employment status with the new district lasts one year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Some new teachers need time to fully develop their teaching skills. Under current law, school districts must decide whether to offer continuing contracts to new teachers by the end of the second probationary year. Districts usually decide against renewing the contract of a promising teacher who has not yet demonstrated the teaching proficiency required by the district. If the district had one more year to observe and assist the teacher, it might well decide give the teacher more time to improve his or her teaching skills.

Testimony Against: The legislation is unnecessary since most principals can evaluate a new teacher's capabilities within the first two years. Extending the length of a prospective teacher's student teaching experience would be a better way to accomplish the goals of the legislation. Any legislation that extends the probationary period should include a requirement that districts help the employee identify and improve areas of deficiency. It is not clear how this legislation improves student learning.

Testified: Senator Benton, prime sponsor; Steve Getsinger, teacher (con); Pat Schroder, teacher (con); Johathan Bill, teacher (con); Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals (con); and Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association (pro).