

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6455

As of February 3, 2016

Title: An act relating to expanding the professional educator workforce by increasing career opportunities in education, creating a more robust enrollment forecasting, and enhancing recruitment efforts.

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

Sponsors: Senators Dammeier, Rolfes, Litzow, Billig, Rivers, Conway and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/26/16.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows recently retired teachers to serve as teachers or substitutes without penalty to pension benefits.
- Specifies "caseload" for purposes of caseload forecasts of common school students.
- Adds elementary and early childhood to the list of endorsements eligible for the Conditional Scholarship.
- Allows out-of-state teachers with at least five years of teaching experience and a National Board Certification to obtain a professional certificate in Washington.
- Creates a recruitment campaign for out-of-state teachers and prospective new teachers in Washington.
- Develops a central depository that allows teachers to apply for jobs in multiple school districts and for school districts to have access to a broader pool of applicants.
- Increases funding to the Alternative Routes and Educator Retooling programs.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Alia Kennedy (786-7405)

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.

Background: The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Association of School Principals conducted a statewide survey in fall of 2015 and found that principals are struggling to hire qualified teachers and substitutes. The feedback showed a particular shortage of teachers in areas that are typically difficult to fill, such as special education, mathematics, and science.

Of the principals who responded, 45 percent said they were unable to fill all teacher positions this school year with certificated instructional staff who met the job qualifications. In addition, 54 percent said they were often unable to find enough substitutes.

Retired Teachers. The normal retirement age for members of Plans 2 and 3 of the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) is age 65. TRS Plan 2 members with 20 years of service and TRS Plan 3 members with 10 years of service can retire as early as age 55. Benefits paid to persons who retire early from TRS Plans 2 or 3 with less than 30 years of service are calculated using early retirement factors that provide a full actuarial reduction based on the number of years between the retirement age and age 65. For example, there is a 27 percent reduction of benefits for retirement at age 62 and a 41 percent reduction of benefits for retirement at age 60.

Two early retirement factor options are available to TRS Plan 2 and 3 members who retire with 30 or more years of service. One of the options was created in 2000 and reduces benefits by 3 percent for each year in the period between the retirement age and age 65. For example, there is a 9 percent reduction of benefits for retirement at age 62 and a 15 percent reduction of benefits for retirement at age 60. The other option that provides smaller benefit reductions was implemented in 2008 as a replacement for gain-sharing benefits. Under the 2008 early retirement factors, TRS Plan 2 and 3 members with 30 years of service may retire at age 62 with no reduction of benefits and at age 60 with a 5 percent reduction.

State law does not prohibit persons who retire from TRS Plans 2 or 3 from returning to work, but it does limit when a retiree may work and continue receiving pension payments. In general, payments are suspended when a TRS retiree works more than 867 hours per year in a position included in TRS or another state retirement plan. However, payments are suspended immediately if a TRS Plan 2 or 3 retiree who retired using the 2008 early retirement factors returns to work in any kind of position with a state retirement plan prior to age 65. This includes returning to work as a substitute teacher.

Student Enrollment Forecasting. The Caseload Forecast Council (CFC) is a statutory body that oversees the preparation of caseload forecasts for populations of persons expected to meet entitlement requirements, and require the services of the common school system, medical assistance programs, state correctional institutions, public assistance programs, and others.

The forecast of students expected to require the services of the common school system is prepared at the statewide level. The caseload forecast for basic education includes children enrolled in grades K-12, private school students receiving services from public schools, "home schooled" children receiving services from public schools, state-funded "summer school" students, participants in the Running Start program, and participants in the University of Washington Transition program.

K-12 enrollment is forecasted as a nine-month annual average full-time equivalent (FTE) student, where one FTE is the equivalent of one student enrolled full time. In addition to the forecast for basic education, the CFC forecasts enrollment by headcount for the transitional bilingual program and the special education program.

Conditional Scholarship Program. The Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification and Educator Retooling programs are designed to help school districts recruit teachers in subject matter and geographic areas with a teacher shortage. Conditional scholarships are available to qualifying participants wishing to participate in either program. In return for the conditional scholarship, participants agree to teach in specified subject shortage areas in Washington K-12 public schools.

PESB determines the shortage areas and selects the recipients. The Washington Student Achievement Council administers the program. Typical shortage areas include bilingual education, computer science education, English language learner, mathematics, science, and special education.

The loan amount for the Alternative Route program is currently \$8,000 per year. The state will forgive one year of loan obligation for every two years a loan recipient teaches in a Washington State public school. The Educator Retooling Conditional Scholarship Program provides financial support - scholarships up to \$3,000 - to Washington certified teachers who seek to add an endorsement in a subject or geographic shortage area.

Professional Certification for Experienced Out-of-state Teachers. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) is a 13-member board responsible for establishing the requirements for the state certification of educators and approving educator preparation and certification programs.

Current law requires passage of a Washington Educator Skills Test Basic (WEST-B) for admission to approved teacher preparation programs and for persons from out-of-state applying for a Washington teaching certificate. The WEST-B contains three sub-tests that measure basic skills in reading, mathematics, and writing. Passage of all three sub-tests is required to meet the WEST-B requirement.

Recruitment Campaign. In 2015, PESB released a report of recommendations for addressing the current teacher shortage. The report highlighted several areas of improvement for reducing teacher attrition in Washington, including assisting school districts with the hiring of new teachers. In addition, the report notes the need for a more robust recruitment campaign geared at encouraging young people to enter the teaching profession and attracting out-of-state teachers to positions in Washington public schools.

Summary of Bill: Retired Teachers. A teacher in Plan 2 or Plan 3 that retires under the alternate early retirement provisions can return to work as a teacher or substitute teacher without suspension of pension benefits.

Student Enrollment Forecasting. The CFC is required to prepare forecasts of the number of persons expected to meet entitlement requirements in the common school system by school district, as well as statewide.

Conditional Scholarship Program. Appropriates \$1 million to PESB for purposes of funding the Alternative Route and Retooling programs. In addition, elementary and early childhood endorsements are added to the list of endorsements eligible for the Conditional Scholarship.

Professional Certification for Experienced Out-of-state Teachers. Out-of-state teachers with at least five years of successful teaching experience must be given a professional teaching certificate if they have a National Board Certification or obtained a second-level certificate in another state.

Recruitment Campaign. OSPI, in partnership with the Employment Security Department, must develop a recruitment campaign for out-of-state teachers and prospective new teachers in Washington. The campaign must target individuals with 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 our public schools.

The recruitment campaign activities include:

- developing a central depository that allows teachers to apply for jobs in multiple school districts, and school districts to have access to a broader pool of applicants; and
- creating or enhancing an existing website that provides job-related information to individuals who are interested in teaching in Washington.

Appropriation: Appropriates \$1,000,000 to the Professional Educator Standards Board for purposes of funding the Alternative Route and Educator Retooling programs.

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 on Original Bill: PRO: There is a serious shortage of teachers in Washington. Almost all schools in the state report difficulties hiring qualified teachers. There is a particular shortage in hard-to-fill subject areas, such as math and special education. Schools are in competition with each other when it comes to hiring qualified teachers. Rural areas have a particularly hard time attracting qualified teachers. Principals and other administrative or specialized staff have to fill the gaps. Schools are forced to fill positions with unqualified educators and emergency substitutes. Research supports that qualified teachers are the key to student achievement. This bill is a broad based, multifaceted approach that provides both short and long term solutions. Allowing retired teachers to return is a short term emergency solution that is cost effective and brings qualified teachers back to the classroom. The teacher shortage will only get worse next year with continued education reforms. There is a late- hire problem in Washington, which this bill addresses

with enrollment forecasting. Washington already has good reciprocity with other states. Changes to legislation at the federal level may reduce barriers for out of state teachers seeking jobs in Washington.

OTHER: The teaching profession is perceived as having low respect and compensation. Washington needs to do a better job at encouraging young people to enter the teaching profession. Higher compensation and loan forgiveness initiatives can help with attracting and retaining teachers. The state must continue to grow the alternative routes and retooling programs. The standards should continue to be comparable to those already required of teachers in Washington. Moving to a centralized application depository is a step in the right direction, as many educational service districts are already starting to do this. Changing the certification requirements for out-of-state teachers has the potential to reduce current licensure standards. Teacher recruitment initiatives should involve institutions of higher education. In addition to conditional scholarships, the Legislature should consider providing stipends to student teachers.

Persons Testifying on Original Bill: PRO: Pam Veltri, Mead School District; Jim Kowalkowski, Superintendent of Davenport School District and Director of Rural Education Center; David Brenna, Professional Educator Standards Board; Doug Nelson, PSE/SEIU 1948.

OTHER: Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Joyce Westgard, Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; Jack Archer, State Board of Education.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.