



Senate Education Committee

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BILL SUMMARY
Senate Bill 202, Printer's No. 171
Prime Sponsor: Dinniman

Summary

This legislation amends Article XII (relating to Certification of Teachers) of act of March 10, 1949 (P.L. 30, No. 14), known as the Public School Code to create a new avenue for mid-career professionals to join the teaching ranks through the use of “residency” teaching certificates. The residency teaching programs will create a streamlined process for professionals with expertise in key fields to earn a teaching certificate.

Existing Law

Article XII of the Public School Code provides for the certification of teachers. In order to be qualified to teach in the public schools of the Commonwealth, a person must meet certain requirements and hold one of the following certificates: permanent college certificate, provisional college certificate, normal school diploma, normal school certificate, special permanent certificate, special temporary certificate, permanent State certificate, certificates which are permanent licenses to teach and other kinds of certificates as issued under the standards prescribed by the State Board of Education. Instructional Intern certificates are currently issued under Department guidelines.

Analysis

Senate Bill 202 creates a new certificate for teaching known as the “residency” teaching certificate. The residency teaching certificate plan is designed to attract mid-career professionals to teaching. The residency teaching programs will create a streamlined process for professionals with expertise in key fields, such as science and mathematics, to earn a teaching certificate and bring their knowledge into the classroom.

Senate Bill 202 clarifies section 1206 (relating to certificates issued by other states) of the Public School Code of 1949 to provide that a candidate holding a valid instructional certificate issued by another state may be eligible for a comparable Pennsylvania certificate upon satisfying certain requirements, including holding a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited college or

university, having at least three years of professional experience, demonstrating subject matter competency and not otherwise being disqualified from teaching in the Commonwealth.

Under the legislation, the Secretary of Education possesses the authority to issue a residency teaching certificate in subject areas where the secretary determines a statewide or regional shortage of teachers exists. To obtain the residency certification, an applicant must have one of the following:

- A bachelor's degree in the subject area, along with at least five years of relevant work experience.
- A master's degree in the subject area, along with at least two years of relevant work experience.
- A doctoral degree in the subject area.

Senate Bill 202 requires candidates seeking a residency teaching certificate to complete an intensive, four-month program that focuses on instructional strategies, child development, emotional support, assessment skills and the standards aligned systems for student achievement. The bill calls for the teacher to receive individual mentoring throughout the school year.

A residency certificate remains valid for three years. After three years, the teacher has the option of converting the certificate into an Instructional I certificate.

The legislation also grants the Secretary of Education specific powers and duties with respect to post baccalaureate certification programs for residency teaching certificate programs, intern certificate programs and administrative certification programs. These include evaluating and approving all post baccalaureate certification programs, evaluating and approving program providers, developing guidelines for the approval of post baccalaureate certification programs and issuing certificates to qualified candidates.

The bill codifies the requirements for instructional intern programs. These requirements are currently not in statute, but rather delineated in Department of Education guidelines. Instructional intern certification programs are those that provide flexible and accelerated pedagogical training to teachers who have demonstrated subject matter competency in a subject area related to their certification.

The legislation, in subsection (d), creates additional opportunities for principals by allowing those qualified candidates with three years of relevant professional experience to receive principal certification, as opposed to the current five year requirement, and by showing that they have completed a graduate program in education or providing to the Secretary of Education that they have successfully completed a leadership development program meeting existing standards under section 1217 (relating to Pennsylvania school leadership standards) of the Public School Code.

Senate Bill 202 also eliminates the requirement that qualified post baccalaureate candidates complete six credits of math and English.

The legislation takes effect immediately.

Proposed Amendment

Amendment A01170 makes technical changes and clarifies that nothing in the bill is to be construed to prohibit the existing authority of the Secretary of Education from certifying out-of-state applicants in accordance with State law or regulation. The amendment also adds vocational director certificate to subsection (d).